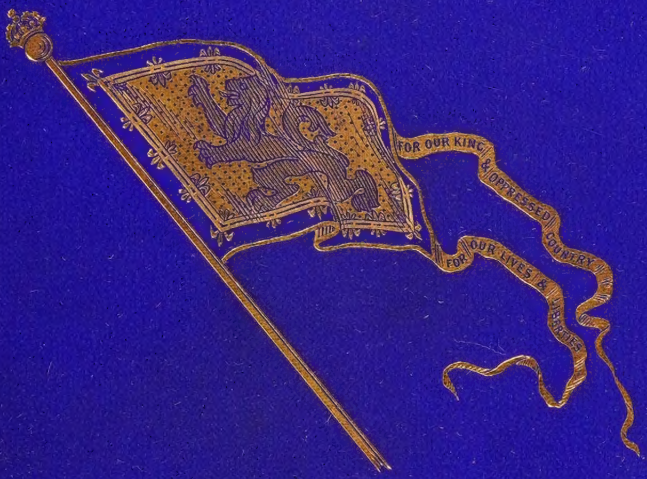
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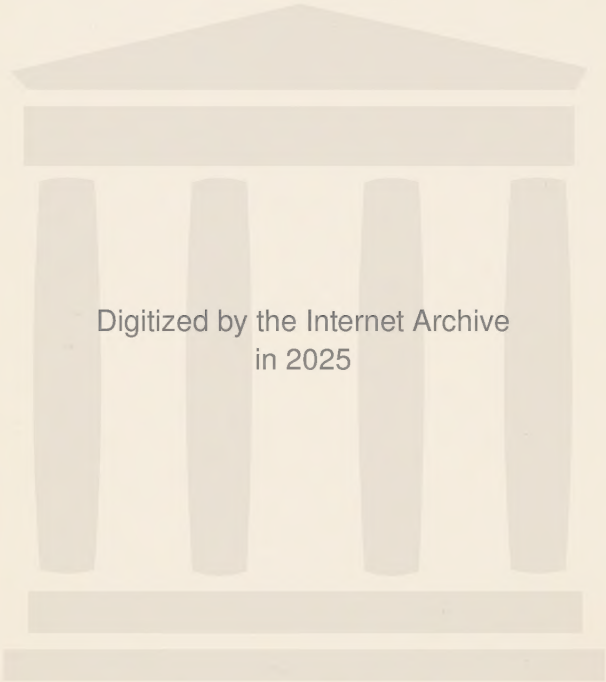
FOR OUR LIVES &

Mary Thornton.

BALMORAL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BALMORAL

A ROMANCE OF THE QUEEN'S COUNTRY

BY

ALEXANDER ALLARDYCE

AUTHOR OF

'THE CITY OF SUNSHINE,' 'LIFE OF LORD KEITH,'
'SCOTLAND AND SCOTSMEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,'
'CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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BOOK II.

THE GREAT HUNTING

(CONTINUED)

BALMORAL.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Even if it were Land's End or utmost Thule itself on which we had happened, it was well to have at last escaped from the vast and shadowy nowhere in which we had been sojourning for hours. We should get home somehow, now we knew where we were ; and I bade Bess take comfort and tell me what we were to do next.

"There is a hunter's hut at Inchnabobart, near the end of the loch. If we can get there, he will show us the way towards Glen Gelder, and will go on to Loch-an-Ean and send Duncan after us."

The night, however, was closing in upon us. The valley of Glenmuick was already buried in darkness, and the gloom was creeping round the tops of the mountains, mingling with the broken wreaths of mist which still clung about them. Away beyond Ben Avon a red bar of sky showed where the sun had gone down some time ago, and though there was a young moon, it was still hidden behind the conical mass of Mount Keen. But we had little time to look around us, for we must press on to find the hut, and we went down through the heather, footsore but still lighter of heart.

We had not gone far, however, and were crossing the lower end of a small depression in the hill, when I thought I saw a gleam of light above us. A flicker at first, it afterwards became a blaze, and then died down again, casting a red glare upon the heather around. I pointed it out to Bess, who looked at it doubtfully.

"That is not the hut," she said; "I don't

know what light that can be." At this moment the shadow of a man, black and distinct, came between us and the light, and I said there were people there at all events.

"They may be deer-stealers," said Bess, "or cateran. We had better go away as quietly as we can."

I was rather reluctant to leave any one behind us who might lend possible assistance; and while I was urging her to dismiss her fears and allow me to go forward and see who the people were, we were startled by the growl of a dog, and a black hound came bounding towards us with threatening bark; but when he came up to us he changed his note, and began to jump upon Bess with fawning caresses.

"That is Abergeldie's dog," she said. "I know him quite well, and he knows me; if his master is there, we have nothing to fear. Lie down Earrach [Spring]—down, good dog."

Meanwhile a man came out into the darkness, waving a great torch of blazing fir above

his head, and guided by the bark of the dog, was approaching to where we stood. The light revealed a fierce-looking figure with a bloody knife in his hand, and a leather jerkin plentifully bespattered with fresh gore.

Pushing Bess behind me, I drew and cocked a pistol, and advanced a few paces to meet him.

Waving the torch round about his head to throw the light forward in my direction, the man uttered some hurried sentences in Gaelic; but on seeing my clothes, he called out in English, "Who are you, and what want you here at this dark hour?"

"We have lost our way on Lochnagar," I said, "I and this lady. If you, my good fellow, will guide us back to Balmoral by the nearest way, you shall have a gold Jacobus for your trouble. Two, if you can get a horse or some conveyance for the lady."

"A horse or conveyance in the head of Glenmuick!" cried the man, with a rough laugh. "Sure you must be one of those Sassenach fools that Earl Mar has brought

into the country to harass men and drive them away from their lawful occupations. Best get out of this with your lady, as you call her, as fast as your legs can carry you, for there are some chiels in the bothy yonder who, if they once clapped hands on you, would not part the grip for less than a thousand merks."

"That is Abergeldie's dog," said Bess. "Who are you, or what are you doing with his hound here?"

The man spoke to Bess in Gaelic, and after a short conversation between them in that language, she told me its import. The man was a vassal of Abergeldie, who had fled to the hills when the laird was mustering his followers, as he did not wish to go to the wars. He would do us no harm; but there were other broken men in the bothy for whom he could not answer, and he advised us to go on our way and say nothing of this meeting.

But before we could stir, four other men

had come down to the hut, and a voluble conversation now took place between them and the first speaker. Bess, who could catch some of it, told me with a whisper that they were proposing to carry us farther away into the hills, and keep us there until we should be ransomed.

I got my pistols ready and slackened my sword in its sheath, determined that I should have at least a fight with these desperadoes for our liberty. If I was overpowered, I might prevail upon them to let Bess go by paying myself the ransom for us both.

But the first comer appeared to stand our friend. I gathered from Bess that he was remonstrating against our detention, saying that if he had any hand in carrying off Balmoral's daughter he would never be safe to return to Strathgirnock. Let us promise, he said, that we should not betray their retreat, and they would allow us to go on our way in safety.

Here I thought I might put in a word. "I shall pay you very handsomely if you can help

us on to Balmoral, and you will make more of that than by any ransom you will get for us, after all the trouble and danger you will put yourselves to. Depend upon it, Lord Mar, as soon as we are missed, will not leave as much as a hole in these hills that a fox might hide in unsearched; and it will be instant death to you if you are captured. Better take my offer of five golden Jacobuses for a guide to see us safely home, and I pledge my word he shall go back safe and unmolested."

This speech appeared to make considerable impression, and though there was evidently still opposition, it was being overruled. At length the man we had seen first addressed us. "None of us will venture down into the Strath; but there is a man here with a horse who is going across to Glengairn, and will give the lady a cast on its back as far as the ford at Balchailach, if you promise not to betray us, and give us the five gold Jacobuses you have promised."

"Agreed, my friend, and thanks to you;

and now get your man and horse, and let us get on as speedily as possible."

"You will have to come up to the bothy and rest until the horse is caught and got ready. The beast has been turned out to the moss. Nay," said the man, as he saw that I looked very doubtful at this invitation, "you are quite safe. I swear it to you upon my dirk," and he kissed the still bloody knife which he carried in his hand.

"We may trust him," whispered Bess; "he will not break that oath."

With Bess on my arm we climbed up the corrie, our friend waving his torch on the ground before us, to enable us to pick our steps. A few minutes' walk brought us to their shelter, which was a rude hut of freshly dug turf built against a grey rock, which formed two sides to it. It was covered above with withered boughs, over which a thick layer of freshly gathered heather had been piled. An aperture in the roof let out the smoke from a fire of smouldering turf, which every now and then

flamed up into a great blaze as a bundle of heather was thrown on to it. Low seats of turf surrounded the walls, and in the centre of the floor lay a deer recently killed, which the man with the knife had evidently been interrupted in the act of cutting up—gralloching, Bess called it. With courteous apologies for the rude accommodation which they had to offer us, the Highlander with the knife bade us be seated, and speaking to another man who had not come out from the hut, told him to go and catch his horse and take us on our journey. After some explanations in Gaelic, the man departed, and our host then told us that the other was a friend from Glengairn who knew of their hiding-place, and had come over to them with some meal and other necessaries of life, and to bring them news of their families. As he had been true to us, he trusted to our good faith that we would not betray their messenger to Balmoral or any other of Lord Mar's officers. To this I readily pledged both myself and Bess; and our entertainer waxing

hospitable, offered to cook a fresh venison steak for us in the embers. With the too-suggestive carcass full in view, we declined this refreshment. He then offered us "an Athole brose," apologising that he would have to make it with oatmeal instead of honey, and of this I partook, and found it very satisfying to my decidedly quickened appetite. Bess, however, could only be prevailed upon to eat a coarse cake of barley-bread washed down with cold water, which one of the men brought her in a horn drinking-cup. Thus refreshed, and stimulated with a glass of usquebaugh, in which I heartily pledged the outlaws, I thus addressed my entertainer: "How comes it, my friend, that a stout fellow like you, who I could have sworn would have no objection to give and take hard knocks when they were agoing, has fled to the hills instead of going to battle with your chief in such a good cause?"

"Abergeldie is no chief of mine," answered the man, sullenly. "I live on his lands; but I

am a Forbes, and will follow no man except Druminnor or Craigievar, and both of them are for King George's side."

"I suppose you are one of the Forbeses of Strathgirnock?" said Bess. "They are at mortal feud with the Gordons," she added to me in an undertone, "and ever since Abergeldie got these lands, they have been but unquiet tenants."

My attention had been once or twice attracted towards a Highlandman who was sitting well back from the fire, and half hid by the rough hurdle of wattled heather which served for a door. It seemed to me as if, any time I caught his eye, his face was fixed on mine with bent and scowling brows. The face seemed known to me, to have somehow fixed itself on my memory; but in vain I tried to recall it among those of all the clansmen of whom I had taken particular notice.

"I have seen your face before," I said at length, when for the third or fourth time I intercepted a fierce frown thrown in my direction.

"Pray that you may never see it again," growled the man; "you are safe here, but the next time we forgather, you shall feel the edge of my knife."

"Why, my friend, how have I ever had the chance to harm you?" I was saying, when all at once it flashed across me that the face was that of one of the companions of the man I had so unhappily slain at Braemar—that of the very man, in fact, that had leaped furiously upon me when his comrade was slain; and my gaze fell before that of the other at the recollection of the misadventure.

"Ay," said he, with a sneer, "you know me now, false Sassenach. The blood of my cousin, Duncan Macgregor, is red on your hands, and, by the holy God above us! your life shall go for his next time we meet. Now my hands are tied by my word to Forbes," and as if unable to bear my presence longer, he moved out of the door.

He came back, however, instantly, and said some hurried words in Gaelic to Forbes, who

also went to the door of the bothy and looked out into the night. "It can only be John bringing the horse," he said; "who would be about here at this hour?"

"I heard the clatter of steel," said the Macgregor, positively. "Stay, there are footsteps and a rustling among the heather. You can hear for yourself."

Sitting where I was I could see out of the open door of the bothy the two men bend their ears to the ground, listening attentively, like skilled hunters as they were, to every sound foreign to the place.

"It is a stray roe," said Forbes, rising up; "or the herd of deer we saw moving across from Conachcraig late in the afternoon."

"It *is* men?" cried Macgregor, drawing his sword; but almost before it was out of the sheath, both he and Forbes were thrown down, bound, and disarmed, and a number of dusky figures crowded round the hut.

"Close in, lads, and let none escape," cried a commanding voice; "fire the bothy, Donald,

and give us light to see what we have in the bag."

The new-comers, armed Highlandmen with sword, target, and firelock, swarmed into the hut, swearing to shoot all who did not instantly surrender; and one man, catching up a burning brand of fir, thrust it into the thatch, and in a second of time the roof was in a blaze above us.

"Come out now, neighbours, and let us see what you are, skulking here in Corrie Beg when Lord Mar and King James want every man in the country that can draw a sword or cock a trigger. Don't be frightened; we have four fathom of cord here, that will soon cure the greatest coward among you of the *tinneas feachd* [army fever]."

"What! is it you, Forbes of Loinveg, and you, Macgregor of Easter Morven?" said the officer, whom I now recognised as the young giant Cattenach. "It is not fear at any rate that has made you take to the hills. I am sorry you came in my way; but when the

Earl mounts we maun all put our feet in the stirrup; and who are these?"

He started in amazement as I was pushed forward, supporting Bess with my left arm, while my right held my drawn sword, which, after a bewildered glance at us both, the Highlanders who had surrounded us had allowed me to retain. They evidently did not know what to make of our presence in the hut, neither for that matter did their chief.

"Mr Bardolph!" he ejaculated, "here in this place at this hour; Mistress Bess, too! Whew!" and his amazement gave place to a knowing leer as he broke into a whistle, looking from the one to the other.

"No, no, Cattenach!" said Bess, hurriedly; "we had lost our way on Lochnagar, the mist came down, and we could not find our road back to Loch-an-Ean to Duncan M'Hardy and the horses."

"And these fellows seized you, did they?" interrupted Cattenach, "and would have put you to ransom belike, since they are going to

set up for cateran. By G—d! the first tree we come to shall be their doom for daring to lay hand upon Lord Mar's friend and Balmoral's daughter."

"No, no," replied Bess; "they have been very friendly, and were to give us a horse to Balmoral. I hope you will let Forbes go, Cattenach, he does not wish to go to the war; but that man there has threatened Mr Bardolph — that wild Macgregor — so your men had better keep him close."

"Threatened Mr Bardolph, Mistress Bess! Well, we can easily make his threats powerless as soon as we come to a tree strong enough to bear his weight. Take Macgregor past the ash-tree at Inchnabobart, Donald, and hang him there. You can join us again in a jiffy if you are smart."

"Certainly not," I broke in; "I forbid you, in Lord Mar's name, to do the man any harm. Although I have done him no wrong, yet I can excuse and pardon his grudge against me, and would willingly serve him if I could."

"I see now," said Cattenach; "the feud comes of the fray at Castletown, where the man was slain. Well, since Mr Bardolph has given you your life, Macgregor, you shall spend it for King James; and I advise you to keep your mouth shut and your dirk sheathed when you see the Sassenach gentleman in future, for you will find Lord Mar not so easily dealt with."

"And you will let Forbes go, Cattenach?" pleaded Bess. "Think, he has a wife and bairns, and his heart is with his own chief, the Lord Forbes."

"No, Mistress Bess, that I cannot do," returned Cattenach, shaking his head. "Fie! would you spare a man to fight King George's battles? No, no; Forbes shall be handed over to Abergeldie, and it will even be well for him if I can make his peace with the laird. And now, if you are ready to accompany us, we shall march. We captured the fellow and his horse at the foot of the corrie, but we little knew who it was meant

for. Close round your recruits, lads, and step out."

Lighted by torches taken from the burning bothy, which was already a heap of glowing ashes, we descended the corrie, at the foot of which we found a still larger body of men—armed Highlanders and the recruits that they had picked up. We found also the horse, with its owner in great distress, which was not alleviated by Cattenach's assurance that both he and his horse were necessary for King James's service, and that he would be fully paid for both at the end of the campaign. A plaid was made to do duty very well for a saddle, and as there was nothing for the lady to hold on by, he suggested that I too should mount with her, Bess riding pillion-ways. For two reasons I readily supported this idea: it was some compensation to have Bess's arms clasped around me, and, to tell the truth, I was dead-tired. And thus mounted we followed the party in the rear, a Highlander at the horse's head to guide us over the rougher

roads, and Cattenach, who seemed a man of spirit and intelligence, walking by our side. At Bess's suggestion he despatched one of his men across the moors to Loch-an-Ean to tell M'Hardy of our mishap, and make him push home to Balmoral with the horses.

The moon came out at length, and her mellow light dimly showed the dark wilds we were traversing, which the great hills all round us threw frequently into yet more dusky shade. There was the precipitous face of Lochnagar on our left, the moonbeams imaging out fantastic masses of the architecture of chaos, grey walls of gigantic height, with black battlements and towers like the stronghold of the Mountain Spirit himself. But all grave thoughts were diverted with Cattenach's conversation. He was in high spirits at the success of his expedition. His pressgang, for such it really was, had swept the whole of Glenmuick, and had secured more than a score of promising recruits, which had been still further swelled by the refugees of our

bothy. I remembered M'Hardy's ram's-horn, which I tendered to him, and he pledged King James's health in one gulp and Bess's in another. He was evidently tickled at our adventure, and rallied Bess on getting lost on the mountain, pretending to believe that we had been trying to make an elopement of it, and were on our way south through the pass. Bess was quite equal to hold her own at her countryman's badinage, and I fancy she must have said some sharp things to him when she spoke in Gaelic, for Cattenach laughed all the more boisterously at her quick retorts.

At the head of Glen Gelder our talk was interrupted by shouts and a waving of torches, and Cattenach hastened to the front. We soon learned that the commotion had been caused by a party who had been despatched from Balmoral in quest of us. They had seen the mountain swathed in mist from Craig Gowan, above the castle, and guessing what had befallen us when we did not appear at nightfall, had sent out a party with torches

and the bagpipes to aid our route home by light and music. George of Coldrach led the band himself in no amiable humour, for his recruiting had by no means been so successful as Cattenach's. Indeed, he had never reached Auchlossan, for, giving chase to a recalcitrant Highlandman whom he had sought to press at Cambus o' May, he had been separated from his party, and had been obliged to return home with a broken head, some hostile villagers having barred his passage down the Strath. He grunted angrily in answer to Bess's explanation of our wanderings, and fairly lost his temper when teased by Cattenach about the success of his expedition.

Day was beginning to break when we came down upon the Dee, where our party separated, Cattenach with his men crossing the river to the camp at Inver, while we reached Balmoral, exhausted and footsore, just as the golden light of morning was beginning to break over the rounded crest of Craig-na-Ban.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was late in the day before I awoke, and the fatigue and excitement of the Lochnagar adventure had brought on a slight inflammation of my wounded arm, and a considerable amount of fever with it. When I opened my eyes, Meston was sitting by my bedside, with a face of portentous solemnity, and broke out upon me at once with the consequences I had incurred in slighting his warnings and undertaking so toilsome an expedition with a green wound. He produced a lancet, and insisted on letting blood; but this I stubbornly refused. I had lost enough of blood already, I said, and would not spare as much more as would redden a pin-point. He might put up his lancet, for I would none of it. All I

wanted was a little more quiet and rest, and I would presently be down again among them in the hall.

"Not with my will," said Meston. "Faith, you are likely to meet with a less placable surgeon than myself as soon as you show yourself. There is that ettercap young George of Coldrach swaggering about, swearing he will have your heart's blood; the laird is as sour as a Presbyterian minister's ale-barrel; the lady is venting her spleen upon the servants in the kitchen—you might hear her as far as Craig Phippie; and Bess keeps out of the way, poor thing, with red eyes and a sore heart I'se warrant."

"What the deuce do you mean?" I cried, sitting up angrily in bed, though I had little difficulty in guessing his meaning. "What has come over them all?"

"Oh, nothing more than you might have expected," retorted Meston, "when you set out with Mistress Bess for Lochnagar yesterday, contrair to my counsel and advice. George

of Coldrach, who is going to marry the lass, is clean demented with jealousy, going vapouring about like that spark in Propertius who boasts '*rivalem possum non ego ferre Jovem*,' and swearing that he will have your life, though there should not be another Bardolph left in England between the bounds of Berwick and the Land's End of Cornwall. He blames the lady for exposing Bess to harm, and she blames the laird; and the laird swears at the whole crew of them for not warning him of the danger, when he only meant civility to a stranger who had been specially commended to him by the Earl—so that I may say with the man in Plautus his 'Amphitryon,' '*quæ intemperies vexat hanc familiam?*'"

"The devil seize you and Plautus both!" I cried, in a passion at being thus played with. "Tell me, in plain English, and in as few words as possible, what is the cause of all this commotion that you describe?"

"In plain English, then, they think that they ought not to have allowed the lass and

you to have gone wandering about the hills alone together, seeing that she is as it were promised to her cousin, and that young Coldrach has taken it very ill indeed."

"What do I care how he takes it!" cried I, in a fury, jumping out of bed. "I shall go down-stairs at once and give the fellow a lesson that will teach him to think and speak more charitably of his neighbours for the future."

"Nay, nay; but gently now," said the Professor, restraining me. "You must keep your room and rest, or you will not be able to go to the rendezvous at the Castletown to-morrow. Lord Mar is to begin his march to the south, and we shall have to be all at his call early in the morning. And as for George of Coldrach, Balmoral, douce man, knowing that the best way to keep down fire is to spread the coals, has sent the lad away to the camp with orders to stay there. So lie down again, and rest content that opportunity of more mischief is put out of your way."

I felt the advice was good, for my wound ached grievously, and my head swam with feverish weakness; and I went back to bed, much to Meston's satisfaction, who kindly volunteered to sit and keep me company until I was refreshed enough to get up. Whatever feelings our last night's adventure might have excited against me in the family, they were not allowed to interfere with the duties of hospitality; for the major-domo himself appeared with a tray and some choice viands, which he assured me the lady had cooked herself, as the most fitting food I could take, and she was busy preparing a brew of herbs which would dispel all my symptoms of fever. To propitiate the good dame, I promised cheerful compliance; and Meston, though he derided lady Balmoral's attempts at pharmacy, was judicious enough not to interpose any objections in the way of these pacific overtures. And later in the day the laird himself appeared, full of polite consideration for my condition, and enjoining rest and

quietness. He treated our losing ourselves among the mist as a jest, although he was loud in his regrets that I should have been exposed to the night air and so much fatigue with a green wound upon me. He inquired about our entertainment in the bothy, and laughed over Cattenach's clever capture of its inmates; and when I told him of my encounter with the Macgregor, assured me that it would be his care that the man should be put out of the way of doing me further mischief. The Earl was going to march on the morrow, and if I was able to ride to the Castletown, his lordship would be glad to see me before he started. This was the message he had sent me by the laird, who had attended him the preceding evening; and Balmoral believed that he had some mission in view on which to employ me, for he had spoken as if I was not to accompany the army.

"I have sent off young Coldrach with the last of my men to the camp to-day," continued the laird, turning to Meston, though it was

evident that the information was intended specially to reach me through this indirect channel; "it is the lad's first campaign, and the leave-taking came rather heavy upon him. I suppose you know that he and Bess are going to make a match of it, and I had to promise that I would give them a bridal as soon as this work is over. For my own part I am loath to lose the lassie, and would have been in no particular haste about it, though Lewis of Auchindryne and Peter of Inverey have been pressing me this while past. However, at the beginning of a rising it is always well to have your affairs settled, and so I have passed my word to George that he shall have Bess as soon as ever we get back to Braemar again."

Meston congratulated the laird on his prospects. "George of Coldrach was in every way a suitable young man, of undoubted courage, though rather prompt to anger, yet, *postquam deferbuit ira*, as Ægesippus saith of Herodes the Great, no man more placable to reason;

and among all the young men of his acquaintance, he knew of none who could carry his liquor more discreetly. As for Bess, she would make a wife in a thousand, a woman far above rubies; and if some of the Elector's redcoats had not spitted him on a bayonet or the Whigs trussed him up in a tow before that time, he would play the fiddle himself for the first reel at her marriage, if he were anywhere within the four seas of Britain when the day came."

You may imagine how pleasant all this sounded in my ears, as I lay in bed with a show of civil indifference on my face, but with flames of the deepest wrath burning up within me. All the devils of jealousy had got hold of me and were rending me in pieces, and, like the Spartan boy with the fox hid under his doublet, I had to bear it all with an unruffled countenance. It was evidently to warn me his daughter was beyond my reach that Balmoral was talking thus; and the thought that I should be left altogether outside of con-

sideration while Bess's future was being disposed of, was maddening. Was she to have no voice in the matter? Was I to be overlooked as if I had no existence? Why could I not interpose and tell them that by a higher law of nature all these plans were impossible? It was like discussing, in the presence of a man who is going to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, all the details of his ceremony; where his limbs were to be sent to, and whether his head would show to most advantage at Temple Bar or Westminster—all the same as if the poor wretch was already defunct. So far as marrying Bess was in question, Balmoral was evidently resolved to ignore my existence; but I swore a deep and bitter oath within my own soul that if Bess was only brave and true he should be compelled yet to count with me, for all that had come and gone. Either a sense of courtesy or perhaps some anxiety to know how I would take the news, made him suddenly include me in the conversation.

"And I hope, Mr Bardolph, that if you are

in this country—although I suppose you are tired enough of the Hielands already—you will honour my daughter's marriage with your presence. Your kindness to her in London and your saving her from those street-raking rapscallions can never be forgotten by me or mine. And I am sure Bess would miss you much at her wedding, if unfortunately you could not so far honour us as to be present on the occasion."

"I am sure she would too," said I to myself. And then aloud, "You may be sure, sir, that I shall certainly not miss being present at Mistress Farquharson's marriage, if I am alive and in the country. As for any little services I may have had the happiness to render to her, they have been more than repaid by the kindness and hospitality I have met with in her home."

I meant what I said, though probably not in the sense that I wished the laird to take it; and whether the words themselves or something in my voice did not altogether reassure

him, the good man looked disturbed, stroked his beard doubtfully, and soon after left the room, making excuse of the preparations he had on hand.

I lay back on my bed and strove to think. Something must be done, and done quickly, for this was my last day at Balmoral; and I could not leave the house until something had been done to stop this accursed project of marrying Bess to her cousin. I must see Bess as soon as possible and learn what she had to recommend. If she was willing, I would carry her off that very night, find out a clergyman of some kind, and take her to my mother. King James and Lord Mar both became of much less moment to me than the loss of Bess. Even if we should fall into the hands of King George's soldiers, it would be a far less misfortune than the sacrifice of my love, although I had doubtless done enough to bring myself within the compass of the statutes of High Treason. But when I came to consider the ways and means, how powerless I seemed.

Here I was in a strange country, among an alien people, and without a single friend to whom I could stretch out a hand for assistance. My eye fell upon Meston. He was sitting by the window, his chin resting on his hand, apparently buried in meditation. Could I trust him? He was a Scot. He was also the friend of Balmoral, and had appeared to be pleased with the news that Bess was to be handed over to Coldrach. But he was also a man of poetic feeling, and would surely have a heart for the miseries of unfortunate love. Moreover, there was no one else to whom I could turn. I would speak to him at all hazards.

"What do you think of this match that we have just heard of?" I suddenly inquired.

"Match?" returned Meston, abstractedly. "Oh, you mean the marriage of Bess of Balmoral with young Coldrach. No doubt a most fitting arrangement. This intermarrying is much in vogue among the clans, partly because each believes that no other blood is

so good as its own, and partly because from the nature of the country the young people have but few opportunities of meeting with strangers; and although there is much sense in what Mercatus observeth on marriages, *Si fieri possit quæ maxime distant natura,* yet in this case the parties are not so sib as to make procreation between them unduly hazardous, being cousins four or five times removed, a degree of kinship which not even the Church of Rome, with all its jealousy of consanguine matrimony, would think a serious obstacle."

"And what do you think of the intended husband?" I groaned.

"Oh, suitable enough—no doubt very suitable. I warrant the cattle-reiving traditions of the Clan Findlay will never decay in his day, nor will Bess want beef at Balmoral while the Lord sends troublous times on the country."

"And you think this man—a cattle-thief—the sort of fellow we hang by the half-dozen

every week at Tyburn—a proper mate for such a woman as Mistress Farquharson?"

"I would rede you to beware how you talk in this strain until once you are on the south side of the Cairn o' Munth," said Meston. "The forcible driving of a hership is by no means to be likened to the vulgar cutting of a purse, or the 'stand and deliver' of a Lowland footpad, nor hath the act ever been held to reflect upon either the honesty or honour of the doer—at least, within the Highland line. In truth, Mr Bardolph, the Ten Commandments read very differently in Gaelic—so differently that you might almost think that Moses had given the Erse peoples two tables of stone for their own sole behoof."

"Good God!" I cried, tossing in my bed, and kicking in my despair. "What sort of people must Balmoral and his wife be, to thus think of sacrificing their only daughter, their one ewe-lamb, to an ill-tempered, drunken, violent, and cattle-driving clown like this George of Coldrach?"

"Excellent people, very worthy people, even as their forebears were before them. But their notions are not your notions; their minds are as those of the people of this glen have been from time immemorial. You cannot make them think the thoughts of a Londoner, any more than you can look at things with the eyes and feelings of a Highlander. You may be sure both Balmoral and his wife have thought deeply over this match before giving their consent to it; for he is a douce sensible man, a little in with the world and world's gear, it may be, and she is a kind motherly woman, irreproachable in all respects, except for her pernicious propensity to dabble in drugs and cures, which hath ever been the curse of her sex since Eve prevailed on Adam to try the apple to correct the crudities of his stomach."

"By heavens!" I cried, leaping up in bed and shaking my hands in Meston's face—"I tell you this marriage shall never be. I shall kill this George of Coldrach, and I shall marry

Bess Farquharson, though every one of her clan stood with sword and targe between me and the altar."

Meston whistled plaintively. "Why, this is much worse than I had thought of," he said, gravely. "I had guessed you had a tenderness for the lassie, but I did not believe that you had anything more serious at heart than just to divert yourself for a time with the only passable young woman within reach."

"Passable!" I indignantly cried.

"Well, then, as beautiful as your eyes like to see her," continued Meston; "but as Plato telleth us in his 'Symposion' that it is only through Eros that we can arrive at the idea of absolute beauty, you must pardon me if I do not regard the damsel with your eyes of love."

"I shall do that most readily," I hastened to put in.

"What I meant to explain," continued Meston, stolidly, "is, that I thought that a gallant like you was just amusing yourself with a fair rustic until you were restored to the *bona*

robas who are doubtless bewailing your absence. I had thought you were making holiday in Arcadia, for which a nymph is a necessary consort; but Braemar is an Arcady in which there are more keen dirks than penny whistles, and I feared you would fall into mischief. But tell me this, are ye honestly in love with the lass?"

"In love! I will die for her if need be. My whole soul is hers."

"And does Bess care aught for you in return?"

"All unworthy as I am of such favour, she loves but me alone."

"Strange now," said Meston, musingly, "and yet how like womankind. *Varietas delectat*,—a foreigner will find favour while a countryman may lay his love at his mistress's feet unnoticed. *Haud ignarus mali;* I who speak can testify to the fact. When I was with the old Earl Marischal in Edinburgh in the year six, there was a fair dame in the train of her Grace of Queensberry. The sonnets

and the madrigals I wrote to her would fill a folio volume. And she married one of the English Whigs who came to negotiate this unchancy Union. Since then my muse has forsworn love, and sings only of theology and usquebaugh—the naughtiness of those sons of Jeroboam the Presbyterian clergy, and the praises of honest conviviality and good fellowship. As for love, *dei talem terris avertite pestem.* My service to you, Mr Bardolph; drink this cup of good native liquor, and think no more of the matter."

I set to work to convince Meston that my feelings were not thus to be set aside,—that I had plighted my word to Bess, and could not tamely abandon her to a marriage which I was sure she did not desire. I entreated his friendship and assistance, pointing out that there was no one else in the country in whom I could confide. As a man of culture and poetic feeling, he must be against such a sacrifice — a sacrifice threefold worse than Agamemnon's, for Iphigenia was speedily put

out of pain, while Bess would be condemned to a lifelong misery. And I so worked upon the good-natured philosopher—not forgetting all the while to appeal to his kindly feeling, his sense of poetic justice, and his compassion for me as a stranger — that to my joy I succeeded in bringing him round, first to discuss and criticise all my proposals; and secondly, to promise to aid me with all the counsel and help that he could command. I suggested that I should endeavour to solve the matter by inducing Bess to elope with me to Aberdeen, where we could get married and take ship for England, and that after I had placed her in a place of safety, I should join whichever of King James's armies was nearest to hand, and make the campaign, trusting to the chances of Balmoral being reconciled to his daughter after the war was over.

This idea, however, met with Meston's decided condemnation. This was no country, he said, where ladies could be carried off in a post-chaise as they were in England. If we

set out, we should be captured and brought back before we were well through the Pass of Ballater. Every one on the run of Dee from Inverey to Tullich knew Balmoral's daughter, and would be glad to do the laird a service by keeping her from running away with an Englishman. Besides, if I left the army I would never reach England. Some Whig would be sure to secure me, and hand me over to the authorities in Edinburgh, and the fate of Nevill Payne might show me what I had to expect there. I remembered the cruel tortures to which this gentleman, a Catholic countryman of my own, had been exposed in the Scotch capital for his complicity in a Jacobite plot some years back, and reluctantly brought myself to admit that the scheme of an elopement did not promise much success, even if Bess could be brought to consent to it, which I much doubted.

But what was I to do, then? I asked my counsellor. Was I to remain idle while the girl might be tied to Coldrach, past all powers

of mine to come between them? Besides, I must do something to relieve my mind. I should go mad if I was condemned to remain a passive waiter upon chance.

By no means, Meston argued, was I to do anything that would awaken Balmoral's suspicions further than they were already aroused. I had time in my favour. The marriage was not to come off until after the campaign, and heaven knew when that would end. "It may last as long as the Troubles in Montrose's time, for all I can see, and with as varied fortunes, unless the English army declare for the king, for I am none of those who think that the Elector will quit his grip of the Crown without a tussle for it; and there are even too many Whigs in the country to aid and abet him. And who knows what may happen before that time? George of Coldrach may never return. Balmoral himself might fall. Even I myself might meet with the *remedium amoris* in the shape of a Hanoverian leaden pill. What use, then, of

anticipating troubles which might be solved by time and events? *Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quærere.* Meanwhile, here was Meston's service to me, *Sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi spem longam reseces.*"

I drew such comfort as I could from this counsel, which, though too sober to satisfy my fevered anxiety, I was perforce compelled to accept. But I must have another interview with Bess, all alone, and learn from her own lips what her wishes were; and I insisted on Meston being my ambassador to her, and endeavouring to get her to fix an assignation for that evening, the last of my stay at Balmoral.

But the philosopher was scrupulous about undertaking the mission. It did not become his character, he maintained, to play the part of a go-between. He was also Balmoral's guest, and could not honourably be a party to any intrigue behind his back. Was it a proper request to ask a Professor and Regent of the Marischal College to play the part of a *proxeneta*, an ordinary blackfoot—a Sir Pan-

darus of Troy? As the Professor and Regent of the Marischal College was by this time more than three-fourths disguised in liquor, I did not consider that I was derogating much from the dignity of his lofty office in asking him to become my envoy. Selfishly enough, my main concern was with whether he had tact enough to get speech of Bess without betraying the matter to Balmoral or the lady. But there was no one else to employ. So I plied him with flattery, protesting that all my hopes rested on his aid. Dan Horace himself had often taken the pen in hand to help on a friend's amours, as divers of his odes did testify. And finally, I made him drink a mighty bumper to the success of his errand, and saw him swagger off at length, with much inward satisfaction.

I passed an anxious two hours tossing about on my bed, with a good deal of pain and fever, but much more uneasiness of heart. I tried to console myself with Meston's arguments that the war might solve all my difficulties;

but it seemed just as likely that this solution might take the shape of a bullet to myself as to George of Coldrach. One thing I solemnly vowed within myself: if ever I received the slightest shadow of provocation from George of Coldrach, I should compel him to fight me, and take his life if I could, or else lose my own. The duel, if there came a duel, should be a duel to the death. Already his arrogant clownishness had on several occasions given me such offence as would have justified a quarrelsome man in challenging him, and I made up my mind to lay aside all forbearance in the future. I had seen enough of the Highlanders to know that the blood-feud was one of the fiercest passions of their race, and that the worst way of winning the goodwill of Balmoral was to slay a member of his clan and house. But as I now realised that I could never expect anything but opposition from the Farquharson family, it was of the less consequence to me how I incurred their resentment. Sooner or later I felt assured

that I would have to carry off my Bess in spite of them all, and that any efforts to win my cause by fair words and conciliation would be labour lost.

Meston, when he came back at length, was considerably further gone than he had been when he quitted me. He had been with the laird, he said, "who had just received a message from the Earl, requesting his immediate presence at Invercauld, and had ridden off accordingly. The lady, too, was going to boat across the water to Monaltrie, to console the young mistress there, who had not been long married, and was in sore distress at parting with her husband to the wars. And she had taken with her a creelful of herbs and simples with which to poison the poor young dame, as if there were any remede for a sore heart except a good posset of toddy. Lady Balmoral was one of those at whom the learned Arnoldus hath laughed, as seeking *longis syrupis expugnare animi phantasmata;* moreover——"

"But what of her daughter? what of Bess?" I impatiently interrupted.

"Oh, she will meet you after sunset at the foot of Craig-gowan, among the little knoll of birches," he said, shortly; "and since the dementia hath so seized you that you can neither speak sensibly on any other subject nor drink sociably, I will even go and lie down for an hour, for my head is still ringing with your love-sick ravings."

And with some irritation and a rather unsteady gait, the philosopher retired to his own apartment.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Dark clouds were rolling across the top of the glen, and the sun had been hid behind them all the afternoon ; but when the shadows cast by Craignortie began to deepen into dusk, I thought the time was come for repairing to the place of rendezvous. Watching my time, I wrapped my cloak closely about me, and stole out of the castle, gaining the shelter of the birches unobserved, and under cover of these I proceeded to pick my way more deliberately towards the foot of the hill which looked down upon the castle. It was a small hill of the arc shape common to the lower hills of the Dee valley, its front covered with birches and pines which had stood the blasts of many years, and with a thick growth of seedling under-

wood sheltered by the parent branches. I walked round the foot of it until I came to an opening in the wood, by which I could see Bess when she left Balmoral through the low postern-door I had just quitted, and seating myself on a grey moss-grown stone, began my impatient watch.

The moments drag as heavily while you are waiting for your sweetheart as the hours glide lightly away when she is with you. This fact I discovered while at the foot of Craig-gowan. I tried to divert my attention to nature around me, but all the while my eye kept turning towards the path which Bess might be expected to take. It was in vain that a lark sang evensong high overhead, and two song-thrushes piped to each other from the branches of a mountain-ash hard by. In vain the deep murmur of Dee came up to soothe my watch, and the evening winds rustled musically amid the leaves. It was the melody of one woman's voice my ear was straining to catch. Slowly and majestically a heron came sailing up the

valley, copying in his aerial course all the windings of the river. Now he was past me, I would follow his flight until he was lost in the distance; and surely by that time, when I again turned my eyes on Balmoral, they would light upon Bess making her way towards Craiggowan. The heron became less and less, until at last it was a mere dot in the air as it disappeared behind the high ridge that shuts in Glen Gelder on the other side. It was gone, but Bess was not come. Across the river the twilight was creeping apace up the opposite slopes, and already the white walls of Monaltrie stood out with ghostly indistinctness. Lights were now beginning to appear in the clansmen's cottages beyond, as they prepared the evening meal by the aid of blazing fir-torch or rushlight lamp. Night was settling down all around—and Bess was not come.

Then doubts began to torment me. Had Meston ever delivered my message? In his elevated condition, might he not have overlooked a matter so trifling to him? No, my

good-natured philosopher could never have been so cruel. Had anything happened to prevent Bess from keeping her appointment? Had Balmoral, had her mother returned, and locked her up perhaps? No, that was impossible. No horseman had approached the castle from the direction of Braemar, and the Balmoral boat was still safely moored on the other bank of Dee. Was it possible, could it be, that Bess had yielded to her parents' will?—that she would, after all that had passed between us, give me the go-by, and marry George of Coldrach? Had she repented already of her promise to me? *Varium et mutabile semper femina*, as Meston would have said, had he been in my place. I began to think bitter thoughts of Bess. I again endeavoured to peer in vain for her through the gathering gloom. I swore at her under my breath, and—the next instant I was straining her to my bosom.

There was no chiding for unpunctuality, no complaints for her delay. Now that she had come, what seemed to have been weary hours

of waiting were as if they had been only some few seconds of suspense. She had come out with a plaid of the bright colours of her own clan thrown over her head and round her shoulders, and the sweetest face man ever looked upon glanced out tenderly at me from amid the folds of the tartan. We sat down together upon the stone, which but a little before I had condemned as hard and uncomfortable, but which was now softer than the most luxurious divan ever Shaw or Sophy reclined upon. And Bess, blaming herself much for allowing me to come out again into the night air with my wounded arm, insisted that I should come within her plaid. Now of all the contrivances ever devised for the special use of lovers, commend me to the Scots plaid. A fan is of great convenience, as I have often found, for two faces, and much tenderness has been interchanged behind its shade. I have kissed under cover of a hood, and exchanged melting glances beneath the brim of a low-crowned hat; but for serious

love-making, the Scottish maiden's plaid is an article of apparel without its peer. Beneath the shelter of its folds you are shut off from the world; and the closer you sit together, the more comfortably can it be disposed around you. Even so sat we on the grey stone at the foot of Craig-gowan, with the shadows of night stealing closely around us through the weeping birch-trees.

I was all anxious to hear what had passed, and Bess told me her simple tale with open frankness and unaffected relief. The uproar had been raised by George of Coldrach, as I could readily imagine, who had reprehended her mother for allowing her to go to the hills with an Englishman, and had upbraided Bess herself with lightness in roaming about Loch-nagar in the darkness with me as a companion. Then he had enraged Balmoral by saying that Cattenach and his companions had been making merry over our night-walk, and hinting to George himself that Bess would "gie him the glaiks" for a Sassenach, until both the laird

and Coldrach had worked themselves into fury, and were only prevented from drawing upon each other by the interposition of the Professor, who artfully told them that they were both fools to make an ado about nothing; that they would do just the very harm they wanted to avoid if they put the idea of courtship into the heads of two young people who had never once thought of it, but who would loup the dyke fast enough if they were once distinctly forbidden to do so. As for me, the Professor had averred they might make their mind easy, for to his certain knowledge I was already pledged in marriage to a London lady. (When Bess afterwards pressed him for the name, he had unhesitatingly given it as Mistress Anathema Stitch, the Bishop of Billingsgate's second daughter, with a great fortune in Bubbles and a pension on the Irish Government.) This marriage was to take place immediately after the Restoration, so why should they make fools of themselves by quarrelling *de non existentibus?*

And then Coldrach had vapoured and swore that he would allow no woman to play "Jock needle, Jock pin" with him, and that he must be off and on with Balmoral there and then; and the laird had said that Coldrach had always had his goodwill, that the match was held to be convenient for all parties, and that if things went well for King James and themselves, they would see about a bridal as soon as they came back to Balmoral. To cut short the discussion, the laird had called for drink, and toasted the health of King James and a happy union of the families of Balmoral and Coldrach; and then he had peremptorily ordered George to depart to the camp for good, to prevent him meeting me and a possible quarrel ensuing.

He had sought to say farewell to Bess, but, in despite of her mother's angry commands to see him, she had refused, and had bolted herself into her chamber. But although she had turned a deaf ear towards his protestations, which in the end took the form of threats, he

had opened his mind to her as freely as the intervening obstacle of a three-inch door would admit of his doing.

"I am going now, Bess," he had said, or rather shouted through the key-hole, "and you will see no more of me till after the wars. I may never come back. If a Southron's bullet lays me low, you will shed a tear for me, Bessie? You will be sorry for poor George of Coldrach, who loved you so truly?"

He paused for a reply, but no answer came.

"You will be vexed, then, Bess, for the way you have treated your own true love. You will mind how I used to run your errands, jump at your least beck, and follow at your heels like a faithful hound; and you will bethink you then, Bess, that you have given me nought but dog's wages—that you have flouted and slighted and treated me like a gillie, with never a word of couthie love between to ease my heart. I wish to God I had never seen you, Bess Farquharson! Will

you open that door and let me plead with you face to face?"

But as the door remained shut, George vented his indignation by a hearty kick and a round oath, which he scarcely took the pains to check.

"And now ye have taken this gangrel Sassenach by the hand, and are trying your wiles on him. But take care of yourself, Bess Farquharson. It may suit him to amuse himself with you now; but do you think he will ever throw a second look over his shoulder at you when he leaves the glen? I'll shoot him like a moor-cock. I'll slit his weasand with my dirk. *Will* you open that door?"

But Bess still maintained silence.

"By God! my lady, but I shall make you change your tune yet! The laird has promised that you shall be my wife as soon as we come back from the wars, and to the kirk you shall go with me though I should carry you in my arms. By heavens! but you shall be made to repent your sauciness before we are a week

married. I'll make you know your master." Then a pause. "Bess, I am going. Bess, I say, I am going away. Give me one word before I go." Another pause, during which he applied his ear to the key-hole. "Then may the horned devil take you and all your false-hearted sex!" and with a fierce imprecation in Gaelic, George of Coldrach rushed out of the castle.

All this I learned from Bess, supplemented in detail by Meston, who had overheard the one-sided interview from his bed-chamber.

"And, indeed," said Bess, "I was sorry for the poor lad; for, after all, we have been playmates, and he is my cousin. But when he shook his fist up at my window as he went off with the last of the men, I could not help laughing — he looked just like a spoiled child; and who knows if I may ever see him again," she added, with a sigh.

I did my best to divert such misplaced sentiment towards myself by dwelling on my own approaching departure, and the doubtful

fortunes which our enterprise involved; and presently I had Bess weeping on my bosom. She would never see me more, something told her; for if I escaped all the perils of the war, I would never think of coming back to such an out-of-the-world place as Deeside to look for her. No, as soon as I had gone I would forget her, or think of her only as the simple Scots lass who had served to amuse me in my Highland wanderings; and I would marry a lady of the Court, who would laugh when I told her of my silly Highland sweetheart. No, she would never see, never hear of me again, once I had left the glen.

I have sworn not to parade myself in the character of an eloquent wooer, and I am not going to repeat with what ingenious blandishments and deftly turned phrases I soothed poor Bess's sorrows, although, i'faith, I do not disguise the fact that you are the losers by my diffident reserve. Ah! wooing was wooing in Queen Anne's days; and I may say without vanity that I was not behind the men

of my age in the *beau monde*, and I might cite brilliant testimonies in support of my just boast. But enough on this score. I clasped Bess to my breast, and swore that I would never rest until I had won her, and that as soon as King James's affairs were settled and I could disengage myself from them, I would return to Balmoral and make her my wife. There was no doubt about my constancy; but how would Bess be able to resist the commands of her father, the entreaties of her mother? Was it not possible that I might come back to Deeside to ask Balmoral for her hand, only to find that I was too late—that she was already the wife of George of Coldrach? Never, Bess assured me; never would she marry any one but me. Though she should live for fifty years and die an old maid, no man except myself should ever speak words of love to her with her will. And then we kissed again; and Bess, sighing, wondered how she could endure to live without me after I had gone away. It would be so lonely at

Balmoral after her father and all his followers had gone, and with no one left in the castle but her mother and herself and their maidens, and a few old retainers who were not fit to follow the laird to the field. And the long Braemar winter was coming, with its dark nights, when the snowdrifts would begin to whirl about the hill-tops, and the winds come howling eerily down the glen, while the Dee, black and sullen, rolled on with an angry roar. Ah! I, who had seen Braemar with its pleasant summer face of purple heather and green braes, knew little how bleak a country it was when the north winds came whistling over Morven, blocking the glens with snow-wreaths, and stripping the bushes and trees down to their bare stems. Ah! it was a dreary winter in Braemar. But she might keep constantly thinking of me, I urged, as the best possible palliative that occurred to me for this hyperborean rigour. Yes; she would think of me night and day, and I must ever keep her in mind. If I could not send

her a letter, I must give her some token that I was well and true to her. Clansmen would be going and coming between the army and Braemar; wounded men—Bess shuddered—would be returning home, and I would easily find some safe hand by whom to convey a message to her of my welfare. But, oh! she could not endure the thought of parting and the dangers I would have to go through. She knew I was brave, and she implored me for her sake not to risk my life recklessly. I do not know that I was in much peril of doing so; but I spoke gravely and loftily of my duty to King James and his sacred cause, and said that, though I trusted to come again to her safe and unscathed, I must not hang back when others were pressing forward,—whereupon Bess clung to me more closely, vowed that she knew I was brave as Wallace wight or Donald Oig-na-h-Alba, and it was that knowledge which made her fear for me. And of course I administered kisses as the best antidote for such apprehensions.

How much of the autumn evening sped as we sat there together under Bess's plaid, the light wind wafting mingled odours of birch and honey from the heather-bells about us, I do not know; but all sweet dreams have their awakening, and ours came from a blaze of fir-torches beyond the Dee, which showed that the lady Balmoral was returning from her visit to Monaltrie. In the glare of light, which was mirrored on the dark surface of the water, we could see the kilted figures hauling the boat to the side, and assisting the dame on board. Two men sprang on board with her, and while one guided the boat across by a rope suspended from bank to bank, the other with a pole prevented it from being carried away by the current. Then another Highlander, waving his blazing torch over his head, leaped into the water to light the lady up to her own castle.

"We must go now," said Bess, with a sigh; "she must not know that I have met you. And she will have her own sorrows to-night,

too, the poor mother, for who knows what may happen to my father before he comes back again."

I wrapped Bess in her plaid, and we hurried down from Craig-gowan towards the castle, where lights were already moving about, showing that the approach of the mistress had been observed. Our hearts were too full for speech, and nothing passed between us until the little postern-door was reached. The lights streaming through the birches showed that the lady Balmoral was close to the castle, and there was no time for prolonged leave-taking. "God bless you, my dearest! you will be true to me whatever betide?" I said, as I strained her in my arms in a parting embrace.

"God keep you, and send you safe back to me!" sobbed Bess, and with that she had disengaged herself from my arms, and was gone.

I remained alone and desolate in the darkness, which seemed the fittest environment for

my feelings. Black without and black within. Thick clouds veiling all the future, and all the past pushing me forward into the gloom. What could come of all these different entanglements in which I was deeper and deeper involving myself, until I felt them choking my free-will and constraining my power of action within their bonds? Could aught of peace and happiness be found beyond this night, that hemmed me in like a wall in my way? There was war, with all its sorrows and mischances, both public and private, on the other side. What might happen to me, what to Bess and her family, in the coming troubles? Once the devil whispered in my ear that if Balmoral and George of Coldrach should fall, my path would be clear for me, but I bade the tempter begone. And while I lingered under the grey walls of the castle, the wail of a bagpipe dirge came floating on the night air across the river from some of the shielings above Crathie. It was the same melancholy air that had caught my ear once

before, and that now made harmony with my melancholy :—

> "No more his fleet foot o'er the heather shall bound,
> No more shall Glen Gairn to his horn resound,
> And in Morven's brown corries the deer may sleep sound;
> Oh! woe and woe's me for Monaltrie!"

But a ray of light here fell beyond me, lighting upon the ivy and honeysuckle that grew together in a great confused clump in the angle between the tower and the wall of the courtyard. It came from Bess's chamber, and it bade me hope. What right had I to complain, and grope about blindly in the gloom, with the light that came from a true and loving heart to cheer me on my way? And so to seek rest in my chamber.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The sun was mounting up behind Craig-na-ban when, after a hurried meal, next morning we took horse for Invercauld and the Castletown. Neither Bess nor her mother appeared, but Angus Shaw, who came out with the stirrup-cup, brought the lady Balmoral's excuses that she was ill at ease as the laird had not returned, and she feared he was going to depart without taking farewell of her. All the while that we were on horseback at the door, my eye scanned the windows and the open hall for some sign of Bess's presence—some last token for my memory to take with me.

Our start was delayed by the disappearance of Meston's servant. David, it appeared, had

his own objections to venturing himself again among the Highlanders in camp, and had absconded that morning, taking with him a braxy ham and a ram's horn full of usquebaugh, by which preparations it was divined that he meant to skulk in hiding until his master came down the glen again on his journey to Aberdeen; and his defection raised some temper in the irascible philosopher.

"The cowardly rascal!" cried the Professor, "he shall taste stirrup-leather when I next lay my hands upon him. He shall find me a worse wight than any Macgregor of the Smoke among them. And yet," added he, cooling down, "the loon is well out of the way. He has even too many auld acquaintances among the Earl's following to be a comfortable companion. But, heark ye, Angus Shaw, if ye lay hands on him, see that ye plunge him into your pit, and let bread and water be his portion till I come to deliver him—not without stripes I promise him."

A promise was given that due order would

be taken with the fugitive, and we rode off at a brisk trot; but turning round at the corner of a clump of birches which would presently hide the castle from our view, I saw a white handkerchief waved from the window of the tower, and my spirits rose with the thought that I was not to be allowed to go without a parting greeting. In the still fresh morning air, the peaceful aspect of hill and valley, the intense silence, tempered rather than broken only by the songs of the blackbirds and the murmur of the river, it was difficult to imagine that from this still fountain a flood of war was pouring forth to overrun the country. Here and there a few sheep were bleating among the heather, and rough dun cattle were already browsing among the bogs. But even an inexperienced eye could see that the aspect of the glen was changed. The folds stood mostly empty, the corn had been hurriedly reaped and thrashed for victual to the army. Not a man was to be seen about, not even an early hunter. The banner that had streamed

but yesterday from the house of Monaltrie had accompanied that chieftain and his men to the rendezvous. Braemar would now be left to women and children and such old men as could not bear arms, with but little victual and few flocks and herds to sustain them. If the war were a prolonged one, what misery must befall these hapless creatures!

"Ay," said Meston, unconsciously falling into sympathy with my reflections; "there is many a braw man will go down Glen Cluny to-day that will never see the summit of Lochnagar, nor hear the lilt of the Dee in this world again. *Morituri te salutant* they may well say. Be it George or James that wins the crown, poor John Highlandman must pay the kain.

"That cairn there," continued the Professor, pointing across to Cairn-na-cuimhne, with its grey sides glistening in the morning sunshine, "is built of the lives of men, and broken and sorrowful hearts are its foundations. After the battle of Pinkie its head was already raised

above the heather. Corrichie and Queen Mary's days reared a fresh mass, and the long troubles of Montrose's wars, with Killiecrankie and the Haughs of Cromdale, have made the pile you see. The stones of five hundred Farquharsons are now lying about the cairn, and how many of them will be placed upon it when the clan returns! Ah, Mr Bardolph! war is a bloody and a costly game, and the lives sacrificed and money spent are the least items in it. It is in the empty chairs, the ruined hopes, the blighted hearts, and the broken fortunes that we see its most painful ravages. Surely the wrath of God is manifested against his people when he sets two nations in the field against each other, still more when he joins neighbour against neighbour in the death-grip."

"With these pacific sentiments, Professor, I am rather astonished to find you actively harnessed in a revolution that is not likely to be a bloodless one."

"Me? ah, well, *deteriora sequor*. I may

say this of myself, that few men would be more blameless, if I only lived up to my own principles—they, at least, are high enough. But as touching this rising, it is not in human nature to withstand the chance of settling old scores. For seven-and-twenty years now, since the eighty-eight, the Whigs have been lording it over us as if the country was solely made for themselves; and, grant that they may have had some wrongs to redress, they have cleared their score with a vengeance. Unless you're a Hanoverian, and a Presbyterian to boot, there is neither living nor preferment for you—but muckle grace that ye escape the tolbooth and the gallows. And here is the Kirk, now that she has got her foot again upon the nation, setting all the powers of the Grand Inquisition to work to oppress, with her elders and sessions, people in private life. I myself—but that is neither here nor there; our cause is the cause of apostolic religion and rightful monarchy, as well as the freedom and protection of an oppressed minority—and the Scotsman

is not worth the name who would not draw his sword for such a plea."

And hereupon the Professor entered upon a learned disquisition upon the moral difference between wars lawful and unlawful, dwelling briefly upon the *jus feciale* of the Romans, and at large upon the ethical position in which the subject has been placed by the learned Grotius, and handled more recently by the likewise learned Puffendorf. The discourse was scarcely interrupted by a quaigh of brandy which the Professor drained to the cause of King James, as we passed the camp at Inver, which was already broken up and almost deserted, only some sutlers and baggage-men still remaining, who were packing up and hurriedly following the army. Upon one point only did Meston entertain any scruples, and that was whether or not the Earl of Mar's proclamation constituted a proper *indicium* or declaration of war—a preliminary which, in his opinion, was a prime essential to the legality of the enterprise. "Strict usage demands," argued

the Professor, "that the Hanoverian pretended Government should have been notified of King James's intention to terminate its usurpation *per feciales*—that is, by tuck of herald and pursuivant—but as well put your neck in a tippet as a tabard on your back for such a purpose; and I strongly suspect, and I strongly opine, that the worthy Lord Lion, Sir Charles Erskine, who they say hath yielded himself to the Elector's officers, would have told his cousin the Earl to do his errands himself; and, apart altogether from the consideration that the Hanoverians would undoubtedly hang any legate, no matter how sacrosanct, who came to them with an *indicium belli*. There is this to be said on the other side, that the observance of such a formality would be a recognition or acknowledgment of a false and usurped power, and invest with belligerent rights persons who ought properly speaking to be regarded as rebels and traitors. The case, Mr Bardolph, is one that it is worth your pains to prepend, for I know of nothing in Grotius that exactly

covers the present instance, and the cases that occur to me from Livy are, I fear, against us—the Tarquins, for instance, formally challenged the Roman Government, before Lars Porsenna's onslaught in their favour. But altogether the matter is a nicely debatable one, on which I would be fain to have your valued opinion, as that of a man experienced in statecraft."

"In truth, my dear Professor, my opinion is simple enough, with all respect to your learning and ingeniousness. Whichever side wins, the losing side will be the rebels, and the only belligerent rights conceded will be axe and rope to those who are luckless enough to be captured. Pray God neither your neck nor mine be stretched."

"Amen!" quoth the Professor; "though in this just and noble cause I trust I might go even to the scaffold with a light heart, ay, and sing my own elegy under the gallows-tree, like that stout cateran, Macpherson, who was justified at Banff half-a-score of years by-past, and made and played his own lament

upon the fiddle—a most delectable spring of Highland music."

But the Professor's disquisition, which in truth seemed to me to be little to the purpose, engaged only one-half of my attention as we rode along. The road to the Castletown was already an unwonted scene of life and activity. Parties of clansmen were pressing in to join the standard at the eleventh hour, those nearest to the trysting-place being generally the last to tear themselves away from their homes and families. When we reached the Ford of Dee, beneath the shadow of the giant Craig Cluny, a large crowd was engaged in crossing. Highlandmen, with their hose and low-heeled shoes tied round their necks, and their arms carefully held aloft, splashed through the icy-cold water with boisterous merriment. Another party would join hands and dash through in a body, playfully attempting to trip up each other on the passage. Now the way was cleared for some half-dozen horsemen, Lowlanders from Buchan or Formartine,

who clattered bravely through, and held on their course in lofty disregard for their fellow-adventurers on foot. Numbers of women, carrying bundles of provisions or necessaries for their husbands or friends in camp, were also at the ford, and waded across with tucked-up petticoats, making little ceremony about the display of ankles, and offering ready rejoinders to the good-humoured jests and raillery of the young men, whose gallantry would have impelled them to carry across the younger and prettier damsels. In the midst of this lively scene another little troop rode up, led by the Lowland laird who had quarrelled with Meston at Aboyne, and who headed half-a-dozen clownish and badly armed retainers with a great show of dignity. The laird seemed disposed to take little notice of us, as, halted on the other bank, we looked on at the scene, until, whether by the bad management of the trooper or by sorriness of the animal itself, one of the horses stumbled and fell in mid-stream. The water was not deep,

although the current was swift enough, and with a great deal of swearing on the part of the man, and much floundering and snorting on that of the animal, both struggled through the stones to the bank, amid the jeers and laughter of the bystanders.

"Ye careless rascal!" cried the laird, menacing his dripping vassal with his riding-whip; "what sort o' usage is that for a fine-blood beast, a colt out o' the Yearl o' Errol's ain racer, Loup the Styles? By my saul! but I will lay my switch about the lugs o' ye gin the beast hae come by ony scaith."

"Fat scaith cud hae come o'er him," retorted the man, "gin he hinna started the auld strain that he got aucht year syne ca'in peats frae the moss o' Mormond? The beast's nane better nane waur nor ever he wis."

"Ye're a born gomeril!" snapped the laird; "see there," as the trooper led the animal up to the side of a bank to assist him in mounting, "I declare if he be na cripplin' on the aff-hand foot! Ye will bear witness, gentlemen,"

he continued, recognising Meston and me for the first time, "to the injuries one o' my best chairgers has susteenit in his Maijesty's service, wha will doubtless consider himsel' enteetlit to replace him gin he should prove to be unequal to the field."

"Troth, laird," said Meston, "your horses are better fitted for the forest than for the field; for never saw I yet sax sic sorrowful jades gaein' on their ain all-fours but on their road to the kennels."

"Ye'll be careful wi' that chairger, sirrah, till I get the Yearl Marischall's offishers to assythe the damage," said the laird, again ignoring us. "Gin I hazard the best o' my stud in the king's cause, it is little eno' that he sud stand gweed for casualties."

"The best and the worst tae, sure eneugh," rejoined the trooper; "for forbye the auld blin' mare that yer honner tried to coup wi' Robbie Balloch the cadger for his cuddie, there is no' a single beast left at Dockinloan Castle to fetch the howdie in time o' needcessity."

"Faal in," cried the laird sternly, interrupting his vassal's loquacity. "Quick trot — gallop!" and away shambled the little troop at a straggling amble until they were lost sight of behind Craig Cluny.

"Ay, ay," said Meston; "the laird hath Scripture enough to know not to go to warfare at his own charges. If he hap upon the luck to 'scape steel and hemp he will win, whoever loses. A plotting Ahithophel, who would fain have sold himself at the Union, if he could have got anybody to speir his price." If this was a specimen of Lord Mar's cavalry, the prospect was not reassuring, and I began to think with some misgivings upon the coming interview I was to have with the Earl. During my stay at Balmoral his lordship had sent me sundry civil messages, with apologies for not having me beside him, urging the crowded accommodation of his quarters at Invercauld and the Castle, and taking some credit for saving me from the rude and turbulent society with which he himself was com-

pelled to consort. He also sent me most flattering accounts of his preparations and propects, for transmission to my friends the London Jacobites. He would cross the Tay ten thousand strong at the lowest computation, and would crush Argyll, who was alone making any preparations for resistance, and seize the castles of Stirling and Dumbarton —Edinburgh, he had reason to believe, was already in King James's hands — before the Hanoverian Government could recover from its surprise and bring its troops from the other side of the German Ocean. There was also, he had added, a charge of great honour and importance which he wished to confide to me, the nature of which he would tell me when we met. Meanwhile he entreated me, as I loved King James and wished for his successful restoration, to press upon my friends to send him a subsidy; and he again deplored the necessity of denying himself the benefit and consolations of my society amid his toils and perplexities.

I had already shrewdly suspected that Lord Mar wished me to see as little of his plans and preparations as he possibly could, and that it was his policy to keep me as much as possible from the centre of action. His wiliness was of the kind that, carefully concealed on the surface, comes through and shows distinctly on the other side; but though I had taken my measure of him, I felt no resentment for having been held aloof. In truth I would have been little use to him among his Highland satellites, except to be pointed at as a pledge of the fabulous riches which London was preparing to send to their assistance, and I was not sorry to escape so false a position. As for the rest, the Earl had, unconsciously perhaps, served my private aims by quartering me beneath Bess's roof and giving me the opportunity to win her. I imagine that he flattered himself that Balmoral's fair daughter was likely to amuse the leisure of a young spark from town, and that by throwing me into her society he was taking the readiest

plan to keep me from seeing too far into his own projects. Be that as it might, the arrangement perfectly answered my purpose, and if the Earl of Mar was pleased, so to be sure was I.

At Invercauld we found that the Earl and his companions had already gone to Braemar Castle, and the castle of the Farquharsons was all confusion and disorder, the chief's servants hurrying forward their last preparations for marching with their master. The banner of the clan, which was wont to wave over the keep, had already gone, and the only armed men about were some aged domestics, who were beyond service in the field, and upon whose feeble strength the defence of the house would depend. A brisk ride over the green meadows and we were again at the Dee, close to the castle, the river running here with a dead deep current over a bed of grey sand; and spurring our horses up the bank, we entered the courtyard. Here it was almost impossible to make our way inside. The small square yard

was thickly packed with chiefs and officers, and the talking and wrangling in Gaelic and English was quite deafening. Balmoral and other officers of the Earl's staff were bustling about, delivering orders, and endeavouring to get the leaders despatched to their various charges. This was no easy task, for each chieftain appeared disposed to fix his own place in the line of march, and when he had yielded so far as to accept a definite station, there was generally another claimant to contest it with him as a matter of right. Almost every arrangement raised questions and claims of precedence, and it was providential that there was scarcely standing-room far less fighting-room in the courtyard, for dirks were grasped and swords half-drawn from the scabbard over every petty detail of rank and order. It seemed to me that if Lord Mar could have placed every Highland clan in the van, and given every gentleman volunteer a colonel's commission, harmony might have been established; but though there was every

ambition to command, there was little disposition to obey. The most ridiculous pretensions were being loudly asserted, and threats of going home again unless their claims were recognised freely employed. Among others I was amused by the persistence with which our friend the laird of Dockinloan badgered Balmoral for a captain's commission at least being made out for him.

"I tell ye it is no manner of use arguing," cried the afflicted adjutant. "My lord will sign more commissions on no account. We have more captains an' colonels in the horse already than single troopers. The Earl has refused commissions to half-a-score of Angus and Mearns lairds, who have brought in ten men for every one of yours."

"And what sort of usage dae ye ca' this?" cried the irate laird, "to me—me, a member of the Scots Parliament, and a baron of the land since the days of Robert the Second! Little hauds me from withdrawin' my force until his Majesty comes to command us in

person, when doubtless merit and station will be held in better consideration."

"I see nothing to withhold you from doing so," retorted Balmoral; "and it will be the easier done that your force, as ye call it, consists of only six ploughmen, with scarcely a jack among them, and as many auld naigs, that are never likely to cross the Cairnwall on their ain legs."

"Verra weel, Balmoral, verra weel," returned the laird, drawing up his shrivelled figure with great dignity. "As Solomon says, there is a time for everything under the sun, and this is not a time to call you to account for your words. Ye take too much upon you, you Farquharson gentry that have got the Earl's ear; but the blood of Pyot o' Dockinloan 'll no brook insult from the best of you. Ye shall answer for this in due course."

"In due course," retorted Balmoral. "And now, stand apart, and let me see to the next business." But here the Earl Marischal came up, and of him the laird demanded redress.

"What, laird!" said the Earl, "is it possible that your merits are being overlooked? Nay, that would never do. But, alas! it is always the true patriot who has no thought of self that gets passed over. However, I shall take it on me to push your interest with the commander-in-chief. Here, Drumtochter," he continued, turning to one of his officers, "take the laird with my service to General Gordon, and ask if there is never a commissary's office to be filled. And heark ye," in a lower tone, "break his pate an' ye get fair excuse, the shuffling, self-seeking old intriguer."

"*Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper*," commented Meston. "Deil ane o' them will put to sea unless he is to be head skipper in the skate-boat."

Meanwhile the Earl Marischal, who had greeted me warmly, led me into the presence of the commander-in-chief, who was in the castle hall surrounded by a crowd of gentlemen, Highland and Lowland, all of whom

seemed to claim a voice in quarrelling with his plans and in criticising his appointments. Except the Earl Marischal and the Lord Ogilvie, no men of rank were present, and these kept aloof from the wrangling controversy that was going on between the Earl and his supporters. The expected news of the capture of Edinburgh Castle had not arrived, and many of the leaders were grumbling that it was premature to make a descent upon the Lowlands until they were assured that the capital was in the hands of King James.

"Very well, gentlemen," Lord Mar was saying in much exasperation. "To use your own language, you have M'Killop's choice—*gabh no fagh*—take or leave. I and my Mar men, with the gay Gordons and the loyal Clan Chattan, march to-day at noon. If you will take my rede, '*eum an fheill air a latha*'—'keep the fair on its day.'"

"You have left us no other choice, my lord," said a chief. "We have taken out our men, and there is no going back again.

MacCaillean Mor and the Grants and Mackays and Munros are armed and ready to swoop down upon us. Our heads are betwixt the door-steps and the side-post; but he that is uppermost to-day, turn over turn, he's down to-morrow. And so have with you, Lord Earl, and *righ Hamish gu-bragh.*"

"Well spoken, Macpherson," cried the Earl; "and if any one among you doubt how impatiently the Southrons are waiting for our coming, let him cast his eyes towards the door. Here, gentlemen, comes an honourable member of her late Majesty's Parliament, sent here by the rich merchants of London to assure you of their interest in this bold stand that we are making for king and country, and of their intention to aid our expedition by their enormous wealth and goodwill. I need offer you no more forcible proof of the zeal of the south for King James's cause, nor of the welcome and rewards that await you as soon as your feet touch English ground."

Availing himself of the murmur of curiosity

that ran through the assembly as all eyes were fixed on me, full of curiosity at the sight of a Sassenach, and of admiration for the character of a Crœsus which had been conferred upon me, the Earl made an excuse of slipping aside to speak with me, whispering instructions to his officers to get as many of the chiefs as possible despatched to their followers. This was the second time he had adroitly made use of me by placing me in a false position and investing my mission with an importance which it had not; but how could I correct him at such a juncture? If a single man was sent to his doom by the promise of my presence, that man's blood, I say, is on my Lord Mar's head, and not on mine.

"You have been unfortunate, Mr Bardolph," began the Earl, "in again happening upon me in a scene of altercation, but you must not mislead yourself by attaching any value to it. 'Tis the Highland nature to haggle when they fancy their own interest or dignity is concerned; and if you would believe me, there

is hardly a breechless gillie-wet-foot among them who does not think that he is pocketing his pride in consenting to serve under me, John Erskine, Duke—I mean Earl—of Mar and king's lieutenant though I be. Nor must you imagine that there is any lukewarmness among the Highlanders in King James's cause, though you see them cavilling and carping among themselves. 'Tis the nature of a nation, every man of which thinks that his own clan should be in the vanguard, and himself commander-in-chief. God knows, they have sorely tried my patience, and if there had been another Scotsman besides myself who understood the art of managing these people, I had fain left him to such a thankless task. But if I can smooth even one step of my master's way to his throne, 'tis enough reward for my humble labours. And now, Mr Bardolph, can you give me any good news from the City of London?"

I replied that I had received no communications of any kind since I had arrived in

Scotland, and that, considering the risk of correspondence, I could only expect my uncle to write to me by a sure hand.

"You will write to him at once, Mr Bardolph," said my lord, earnestly. "Now or never is the time when all who love King James can best assist his cause. Tell him that we have men in plenty, but that the money is sadly lacking, and that I, as the king's lieutenant, will gladly receive any loan for the service of his Majesty. I will not conceal from you that Argyll is likely to give us battle before we cross the Forth. Well, we do not fear him, but the more complete our victory the greater will be our conquest; and the more people flock to our standard, the more money we shall want to pay and support us. In sending to me an envoy of your talents and penetration, your friends in London have shown their zeal for the cause, and you can best requite your trust by representing to them the urgent need his Majesty has for assistance. And now as to yourself. I

need not assure you of the comfort it would be to me to have your society and counsel in my camp; but I am in expectation of the speedy arrival of the king himself at either Aberdeen, Peterhead, or Dunottar, as may be most practicable for his Majesty to land. There must be some fitting person to receive his Majesty on disembarking — and here is my difficulty. I cannot leave the army, nor can I ask any of the noblemen who are with retainers in the field to leave their men and play courtier. Any of the chiefs is out of the question. Now it has occurred to me that you, having no command and being versed in Courts, and with your position as a member of the late Parliament and the representative of his Majesty's London friends, would be the very person to meet King James on his arrival. You can imagine what his Majesty would think if I were to send your friend the laird of Dockinloan, or some Badenoch or Lochaber chieflet, to him as lord-in-waiting. You are just sent here by

Providence to relieve me from my dilemma, and I assure you I shall stir up no small jealousy and bitterness among some of my friends by selecting you for the duty."

Here I entreated his lordship not to incur any trouble on my account; my ambition was only to serve his Majesty, and I was prepared to do so in the humblest capacity. But the Earl heeded not my protest.

"It is most desirable that some one from England should be there to receive his Majesty, and give him accurate information of the posture of affairs in that country, and I am sure I can send him none more loyal and trustworthy than yourself. I trust you will consider this selection as a mark of my high esteem for you, and believe that I am sacrificing my desire to have you with myself to your own advancement. You will be able to accompany my Lord Marischal back to Aberdeen, where he goes to proclaim the king and establish his authority, and you will be duly informed of where and when you are to meet

his Majesty. And I devoutly hope that our next meeting may be in a victorious Court, enlightened by the royal presence."

To this pious wish I could only say Amen! and the Earl left me to look after other duties. I had no right to complain—I even ought to have felt flattered by the Earl's charge; but I had a strong suspicion that Lord Mar preferred my absence to my company. I had no great desire for taking part in a campaign in which I could have no pretensions to a post of honour; but I did feel that this recognition of my value as a courtier rather than a soldier was somewhat mortifying to my vanity. I had thought of distinguishing myself alongside of Balmoral in the field, and proving by my sword that I was not unworthy to be his son-in-law. Well, if I was going back to Aberdeen I should take Balmoral on my way, and see Bess once more. That at any rate was a gain.

CHAPTER XXX.

On a knoll above the stream of the Cluny, at the foot of the rock on which the standard had been unfurled, the Earl of Mar and his officers took up their position to review the army as it marched away from Braemar. The folds of the royal banner again waved over us in the light autumn wind, and its gay pendants, with their legends of loyalty and patriotism, rose and fell, curled and uncurled, in the soft breezes.

The scene of that day will dwell in my memory till its latest hour, since there never was spot so well fitted by nature to be the cradle of a noble enterprise. High above the purple hills the deep blue of the heavens smiled down into the valley, till it was re-

flected in the waters and absorbed in the green haughs and yellowing slopes. Little fleecy cloudlets sported about the massive shoulders of Morrone, across whose dark-brown sides there flowed a flood of sunshine, playing among the purple heather and filling its green corries with hues of gold. Away beyond us were the mountains on the north side of the Dee, the deep glens between them lying in dark shadow; and beyond all the lofty ridges of Ben-na-bourd, with its white patches of snow and the black rocks on its summit, like a wizard's herd of misshapen monsters sleeping lazily in the sunshine. Behind us were the rugged heights of Craig Coinnich, looking down upon a spectacle of warlike array such as it had not witnessed since the Big-headed Malcolm had fixed his throne on its crest to overlook the muster and sports of his liegemen of Mar. The valley, from the mouth of Glen Cluny to the Castle knoll, was alive with movement. On every level spot Highlandmen were forming into rank amid the

clash of arms and the shrill notes of the war-pipes. Chiefs and their officers were darting to and fro getting their men into order, inspecting arms and accoutrements, serving out powder to those who had firearms, and supplying such weapons as could be procured to those who were deficient. Loud and deep was the wrangling over coveted weapons—the distribution being apparently made according to the probability of the recipient's presumed ability to make the most efficient use of them; and rival deeds of prowess were put forward to support the demands for a musket or a handsome target.

"I shot the *Factar mor* of Forbes at a hundred yards in a misty day, by the head o' Glen Nochty," cried one indignant claimant, with tears in his eyes; "and ye gie the gun to little Duncan, wha cudna sheet a *sidier roy* though he were tied to the end o' it."

"Atweel, laird," was the remark of another disappointed petitioner, "yer pistols are yer nain, an' ye can gie them tae fa ye like; but

mind ye, gin ye lose the fecht, the wyte winna lie at my door," and he stalked away with the manifest conviction that the Stuart cause had been imperilled in his own person.

Arms was indeed the great difficulty, and though some of the more warlike and predatory clans came fully equipped into the field, there were others who had the utmost difficulty in making anything like a respectable appearance.

"Keep weel to the left," was the order of one chieftain, "and win by the Yearl as speedily as ye can. Thae guns hinna seen the licht o' day sin' Tippermuir; an' gin ony o' them were to gan aff, Lord only knows what wad be the upshot!"

Amid the general deficiencies and the general ambition to make an imposing appearance, devices were hit upon not unknown to Betterton or Manager Rich.

"When ye win past my lord, John," said one commandant in a low tone to his lieutenant, who was the proud possessor of a

dozen new muskets, that had found their way across to the secret arsenals of Slains or Dunottar from the French coast, "ye'll jist slink cannily into the howe and come back and lend yer guns to Rory Breac and his lads, that are bringin' on the rear-gaird. The honour o' Corgarff maun be menteenit at a' costs."

In the midst of all this bustle and commotion the pipers alone seemed calm and collected. Proudly each musician strolled about on the verge of his own clan, blowing its peculiar gathering-notes with all the might of his lungs, and utterly indifferent to the summons which others of his craft were putting forth in his immediate neighbourhood. To the untutored ear the jangling discord of shrill notes was overpowering; but the musicians themselves remained unaffected, and each pealed forth his own music as though there had been no other sound to break the solitude. Nor were the Highlanders at all confused by the din, for each readily recognised the sound of his own piobrach, and, guided

by it, threaded his way to his own ranks. Now and then the blast of a bugle from the skirts of Craig Coinnich, where the Earl's adjutants, Generals Gordon and Hamilton, sat on horseback controlling the muster, rang clear and shrill across the clamour, while a horseman would spur over the slopes with orders; and at the end of the view, beneath the castle walls, a body of two or three hundred horsemen were already in their saddles waiting for the word to march.

It was afternoon before the force could be got into the form of a column of march, and meanwhile we had been loitering by the standard or galloping our horses in short runs across the field. The Earl, whose bodily imperfections were least conspicuous on horseback, looked gallantly enough as he backed a spirited roan charger, in brigadier wig and gold-embossed breastplate. Round him were the Marquis of Huntly and the Earl Marischal, the Earls of Aboyne, Strathmore, Airlie, and Southesk, with a number of other lords and lesser

barons, and behind him the chief of Inverey bore aloft the royal standard of Scotland. Such an assembly, such surroundings, could not fail to excite the highest sentiments of enthusiasm; and when at last the signal to march was given by the firing of an antique falconet from the ramparts of the castle, a shout was raised which might have been heard between Lochnagar and Ben Avon, and which must have startled the deer in Glen Ey and Glen Derry. "Righ Hamish-gu-bragh!" "For God and King James!" in mingled Gaelic and English, and then the march began; the line headed by a troop of horse, composed chiefly of Buchan gentlemen under Lord Pitsligo, a nobleman who served his God not less heartily than he served his king, and who hath since put his pen to some notable works of a devotional cast. Then came the clan Farquharson and the Earl's own vassals in his domains of Mar, a fine-looking body of men, not less than five hundred in number, all remarkably well armed and equipped. The force was headed

by young Invercauld, their actual leader, Peter of Inverey, being behind the Earl with the royal standard; and as the clan halted to salute, the Earl rode forward a few paces and spoke to several of the chieftains. "What, Auchindryne!" he cried, spying a tall thin white-haired man leaning on his claymore under the banner of the Farquharsons, "surely your services at Killiecrankie might have earned you your repose at your age."

"Faith, my lord," responded Auchindryne, who was acting as major of the Farquharsons, "I can hardly houp to win sae far ben as I hae been in my day; but I may yet be of some use. Gin ony o' my lads seek to flinch, I'll be there to sheet [shoot] them."

"Well said!" cried the Earl, laughing; "and though your powder will not be wanted for such a purpose, I have no doubt your pistol will find a better mark. His Majesty shall hear of your zeal, Auchindryne," he added, raising his voice; "we shall have to be on our mettle, when we have Dundee's old warriors

showing us the way;" and with a wave of his hand he gave the signal to march, the pipes struck up, the banner of the lions' heads was flourished in the air, and the clan Farquharson departed up Glen Cluny at a swinging step, the clansmen gaily carolling the Gaelic marching chant:—

"Gabhaidh sinn an rathad mór
Olc no math le càch e."

"We'll take the high road,
Let them take it well or ill;"

the song of Montrose's Highlanders as they marched to Inverlochy, as Balmoral informed me. The banners showing the three boars' heads of Gordon next advanced, led by Gordon of Glenbucket, whose cacophonous name is said to have disturbed the dreams of the late Defender of the Faith; and with him were Gordon of Abergeldie, with the Deeside portion of the clan, and Gordon of Avochie, with the men of Strathbogie. Fine well-knit rugged fellows they were, as they gaily swung past the standard, well provided with arms,

and each man with a sprig of green ivy in his bonnet. After the green plaids and kilts came a body of horse recruited from the tenants and vassals of the Duke of Gordon; and the Earl warmly congratulated the Marquis of Huntly, who was beside him, upon the appearance and numbers of his followers. The Marquis bowed coldly at the compliment, for there was no love lost between him and the commander-in-chief; and, indeed, his lordship scarcely sought to disguise his scorn of the Earl of Mar's military incapacity.

It would be like a second Catalogue of the Ships to recite the names and merits of all the clans and companies who passed in review before King James's commander-in-chief. The Highland chief keeps a seannachie, or private herald, whose office is to recount his master's genealogy, and to pick holes in the pedigrees of his neighbours. It would take one of these functionaries to do justice to the names and deeds of the various Macdonalds, Macphersons, Macintoshes, Shaws, Chisholms,

and even loyal Grants and Forbeses, who filed past the standard, and the *rôle* is not to be attempted by an English pen. To most of these the Earl had some compliment to pay, some promise to hold out of royal favour and reward. Two companies towards the end of the column—a company of four or five score indifferently appointed foot, followed by a small body of horse—were led by a clownish-looking officer, who halted to salute the Earl, and who was evidently in a state of mortal trepidation. At the sight of the detachment Lord Mar's face assumed its darkest frown, for it was the contingent from his own lordship of Kildrummie, and its leader was Forbes of Inverernan, his own bailie.

"And this is all you have got to show for Kildrummie!" said the Earl, in a low voice of passion; "scarcely a bonnet-laird with but a single daugh to his name who does not ride with a better following. Had it been the summons from your own Whig chief, you would have put your best foot foremost. But mark

me, Jock Forbes, if you and your men are chargeable to me as much as one plack in the coming campaign, I'll hang you on your own justice-tree on the castle-knowe of Kildrummie, so forage for yourselves, in the devil's name."

Inverernan, who had never opened his mouth, rode on with sullen stolidity. Though a vassal and an officer of the Earl of Mar for his lands in Strathdon, his natural feelings, perhaps, were with his own chief, the Lord Forbes, who was active on the side of King George's Government, and his remissness had before this called forth the Earl's reprehension. The next company that passed received a more cordial greeting. A body of some forty smart young fellows, partly Highland and partly Lowland in attire, each with gun and broad-sword, came swinging along. They had no standard or bagpipes, but the gigantic figure of Cattenach of the Ballochbuie, who strode at their head, was an ensign distinctive enough. From Cromar and the glens of Cushnie, the skirts of Morven and Culbleen, he had re-

cruited a band of stalwart and daring deer-stealers and cattle-lifters, Cattenachs, Couttses, and other broken families, who, already outside the pale of the law, were ready for any enterprise that held out a promise of profit and plunder. As the men halted before the Earl, whose anger most of them had good occasion to dread, there was an expression of amusing impudence not unmixed with anxiety in many of their faces.

But this was not a moment for ripping up old sores, nor were certificates of character in much request at Lord Mar's muster.

"What, Cattenach!" he cried, all bland heartiness. "My old enemy of the Balloch-buie. Nay, then, I am better used at the hands of my foes than at those of my own household, for a likelier set of lads has not passed before me this day than these free foresters of yours. I shall remember you, man, when we come back again, and your good services; and for you, my fine fellows, only do half the scaith to King James's

enemies that you have done to your Lowland neighbours, and it will not be a stag from Morven or a roe from Culbleen that will make ill-will between you and John Erskine of Mar, whatever may have been in the by-past. Go now, and prove yourselves men for King James. And if never one of you comes back," he muttered to himself as he watched with an evil eye the departing company, "it will be the best riddance the country-side has had for this many a day."

At length with a flourish of trumpets the main body of horse came up, closing the column, and halted while the Earl and his officers took their places at its head, and fell into the line of march amid the shrill blast of the bagpipes and the blare of trumpets. The Earl Marischal and others, to whom I was now joined, accompanied the march a little distance up Glen Cluny. The sun was now over Morrone, whose steep brown sides slope down to the narrow defile of the Cluny, through which the stream which gives its name to the glen

flows amid narrow haughs of grass and boggy meadow on each side. As we ascended the glen we could see before us the line of march, extending far in front of us until it was lost in the windings of the pass, the bright targets and arms shining in the afternoon sun, and the various banners tossing their folds in the light winds, which bore down to us many commingled strains of bagpipe music. Spread out among the hills the army seemed but a slender force, thus setting out to shake the throne of three kingdoms; and there was something in the daring and chivalrous idea of the enterprise that filled me for the time with a wild longing to accompany it, and share its fortunes for weal or woe. Once beyond that dark horizon of hills, would it burst like a torrent upon the Lowlands, sweeping every obstacle from its path in its resistless wrath? Or would it be like some of those headlong floods that Eastern travellers have told us of, which dash down from the heights only to find themselves silently absorbed in

the arid sands of the desert? It was Braemar going to war with Great Britain, surely a bold flight of presumption. *Athanasius contra mundum* had not been a more sublimely astounding spectacle; and yet Athanasius had not the worst of the tussle for the time being. The very boldness of the undertaking was its best promise of success, and there was little lack of self-confidence among the clansmen as they briskly strode up the glen, the cheery refrain of their tramping march borne back to our ears—

> "Gabhaidh sinn an rathad mór
> Olc no math le càch e."

At the turn of a road as we came in sight of Auchallater we halted and bade our adieus to the Earl and his men. With me the Earl's leave-taking was of the briefest, and little more passed between us than a whispered reminder on his part to press the urgency for supplies upon the London merchants. With the Earl Marischal a longer conference took place, in low tones, apart from the others;

and at its end Lord Mar rode off with an "I shall expect to see you speedily, my lord."

"Ay, ay," said the Marischal, laughing; "never fear me. I shall be there in good time to wet your Grace's new patent, and to help to make Argyll pay the charges of the entertainment, and so may God be wi' your lordship."

The Marischal sat long and silently on horseback and watched the line of march winding up Glen Cluny, until the last of the cavalcade disappeared behind the dark skirts of Stron-dhu. The glens were already filling up with shadow, and mists were curling round the hill, while the wind that swept down the glen blew in colder gusts, which bore along with them the piobrach notes in fainter and fainter cadence. The awful silence of the Braemar mountains once more settled down upon them. As it closed around us we remained gazing vacantly into the wilderness of hills that had swallowed up our hopes and our ambitions. That waste solitude held the secret, to read the riddle of which was to read

the fate of the nation. I thought of those terrible forces which, hidden from mortal ken under the ground, work silently and unsuspectedly for some great outrage upon the face of nature, and then suddenly burst forth in the form of earthquake or volcano. And then, as the solitude closed in still more around us, came the feeling that this army had after all been a mere vision, a phantom of the wastes, which had vanished into its native obscurity —"the earth has bubbles as the water has." A little ago we had been in the full bustle and despatch of military life; the tide had now flowed back and left us stranded on a desert shore.

"*Jacta est alea*," said Meston, wearying of the silence. "We're o'er the burn now, my lord—*sed revocare gradum!* 'Tis but another act of the old Satyric drama, in which heroes and demigods play the parts, and clowns supply the chorus. But were it not well that we jogged back to the castle, for I for one am black fasting since sunrise, and I would

fain drink a bonallie to yon lads who have gone up the glen?"

"True, *magister*," replied the Earl; "we have no time for dreaming, and I crave your pardon, Mr Bardolph, for my forgetfulness, which has caused this delay. But in truth I was asking myself whether all this was real, or whether I had not dreamed of an army disappearing in the glen yonder."

"It is a dream, my lord, that the good folks of Angus are likely to find a waking reality when the Highlandmen burst upon them from the hills, clamouring for brose and braxy mutton—for, as you may see for yourself, the baggage-train of provender is by no means extensive. Should my Lord Mar ever find himself under the necessity of marching, like Cæsar, *impedimentis relictis*, the total loss will not be overwhelming."

Indeed, half-a-dozen carts loaded with oatmeal, that were now toiling painfully up the glen, did not promise much for the victualling of the army, unless its efforts at foraging

were all the more successful. In command of these provisions was the laird of Dockinloan, with his sorry half-dozen horsemen, and a score or so of poorly armed Highlanders, who were driving a number of black cattle before them. The laird solemnly halted his command, with the evident intention of entering into parley with the Marischal; but the Earl, with a hasty "God be wi' ye, laird!" struck spurs in his horse and cantered on.

"I cannot help wondering, Mr Bardolph," said the Earl, as we neared the end of the glen, and descended once more into the valley of the Dee, "what you, an Englishman, and a man of the world, who has seen the vast preparations of modern war, must think of us all. Why, in England you would have sent the sheriff and his posse, with perchance a company or two of dragoons from the next garrison town, and, *presto*, the revolt is put under. But you must not misjudge us. It is not the first time in Scottish annals that a feeble spark has kindled a great blaze. When

Robert the Bruce left his hiding and landed in Scotland, he had barely three hundred men with him, and yet he speedily succeeded in wresting the country from the grip of the strongest and greatest king that ever ruled England. Montrose embarked on his war for royalty with only two or three companions, and came very near restoring King Charles's supremacy. And in your own annals, have you not the example of Henry Bolingbroke at Ravenspurg, who, beginning with a handful of followers, fought his way to London and the Crown? You may say the times have changed for such hazardous adventures to prove successful. Loath am I to think that the time should ever come in this Scotland when the cause of rightful loyalty, sanctioned by time and by the long memories of tender associations, should ever lack a response, however few there may be to uphold it. The *magister* here will tell you the principles of *jus divinum* better than I can, for I am but a plain man and no casuist; but surely if a

nation has rights, a king has so likewise, and it hath never been the custom in this country to shift about our rulers as burghers elect their provost. And what have we got by the late change? Scotland has lost its position as a nation, and is less thought of by our masters in London than a riding of Yorkshire. Our castles and palaces, the monuments of our independence, will soon be as much mere antics as the old plate, mail, and two-handed swords that hang in our halls. Our language, in which Blind Harry and John Barbour sang our deeds, will become a tongue as dead as Erse. Who are the Walpoles, the Stanhopes, the Sunderlands, and the Townshends, that Scotland should have to crouch at their feet, and gnaw any bone that it may please their graces to throw to her? Her late Majesty—God be with her!—loved her country and its people, and if she had only come among us herself, she would have carried the hearts of the people captive. But now that she is gone, we are left to the mercy of an English Parlia-

ment, which will not rest until it has rooted out every relic of our independence. For my part, I would rather have accepted the rule of Edward Longshanks than submit to be ruled by a junta of English politicians and placemen. The cause of King James is also the cause of Scotland's freedom, and I would be unworthy of the name I bear, as well as of the ancient office I hold, if thought of either lands or life kept me back from any enterprise, however desperate, undertaken for king and country."

"*Victrix causa diis placuit sed victa Catoni*," commented Meston, with a sigh. "This toom glen gives me a cold shiver. I hope the loons have left sufficient vivers behind them, for my throat's dry to drink his Majesty's health and victory to Bobbing John."

The glen had indeed an empty and deserted aspect, as it lay in the silence of the late afternoon with the broad shadow of Morrone darkening the slopes. The sounds of life were hushed in the hamlet. Women stood in little

groups by the cottage doors talking in low tones of their husbands and sons who had marched away with Mar, and of the chances of war, and when they would come back. Old men sat on stone settles by the door, recalling perhaps how, in the days of their youth and strength, they had stepped out to the notes of the piobrach, under the banner of the Black Colonel of Inverey, or brave Donald Oig of Monaltrie, and warming up their old hearts with memories of the wild free life in the time of the "Troubles," with its herships and onslaughts, and joyful returns laden with booty. But that was before the Sassenach succeeded in getting the country under his grip; and there were mingled with proud memories of the past forebodings of the future. Would young Donald or Ian or Finlay, on whom the father's declining years depended, come safe out from under the Saxon steel and escape the rope, and, what was worse than either steel or hemp, the life of penal toil in some Lowland laird's coal-mines,

or banishment to the plantations beyond sea, where no heather grew, and the kindly Scots tongue was never heard? The blacksmith's forge, where pikes had been shapen and swords ground so busily but a few hours before, now stood with closed door, silent and smokeless; and the smith himself, with his tools knit into his leather apron, had girt on his sword and gone over the hills with Invercauld. From the pastures beyond Auchindryne came the lowing of cows and the bleating of ewes, for milking-time had come and gone unheeded. Life was at a standstill with all—but it was only for a moment; and to-morrow would bring its own cares in plenty. What remained of the harvest had to be gathered in and stored, grass had to be shorn for winter fodder, meal had to be provided against the long and severe Braemar winter; and behind all there was the dread of caterans from Lochaber or Badenoch, or red soldiers from Aberdeen, coming up the

Strath in the dark nights of winter, and no one left to protect the homesteads and folds save old men and weak women, whose husbands and sons had "gone out" with the Earl.

BOOK III.

THE LONE GLEN

CHAPTER XXXI.

We rested a day in Braemar, waiting for the coming in of belated volunteers, who were mustered by the Earl Marischal and despatched after the army. This did not take very long time, and the day was not far advanced when the Earl proposed that we should go up the hill, on the chance of getting a shot at a roe or perhaps a stag.

Although no great sportsman—nor indeed was the Earl Marischal, though he excelled in all manly exercises—I was glad to have a chance of seeing somewhat of the chase for which Braemar hath for ages been renowned. I remembered the accounts which John Taylor, the Water Poet, has given of the great huntings he saw in Mar a hundred years bygone;

and it would be something in after-time to remember that I too had pursued a sport which he hath made so famous. But it was with no great escort that my Lord Marischal and I set out to the forest. The marksmen of Mar, who could follow the deer from morning till night, from its lair in Glen Lui until brought to bay in the wilds of Braeriach, or amid the rocks of Ben Avon, were all away with the Earl; and the dozen of ancient foresters who could be hastily got together for our hunting train were stiffened with years and toil, and more able to recount the exploits of ancient days than to aid us in emulating them. With the few we had, it was useless, the Earl said, to attempt to drive the deer, and our only chance was to find out their whereabouts and endeavour to get a cautious shot at them. We rode up the glen called Alt-Dowrie as far as we could manage to take the light ponies that had carried us so far; and we then dismounted by the side of a well that bubbled out from a bank of green moss.

It was agreed that we should here break up our company, and that while the Earl went higher up the ravine, I, under the charge of a certain Seumas Ruadh Oig, an experienced hunter, should cross the shoulder of the hill and seek for a certain corrie where deer might probably be lying. And thus we parted, leaving the philosophic Meston, at his own request, lying on his back by the side of the streamlet, with a flask of strong waters on one side and a small volume of Latin verse on the other, to woo the Muses in this mountain solitude. Seumas Ruadh Oig was an active veteran of seventy summers, and could speak English fluently, which was perhaps the reason he had been allotted to me. His name, he told me, signified Young Red James, though he was no longer young, and had never been red; but his father, the original Red James, had been a man of prowess in the Strath, and it behoved his son to continue the name which everybody gave him. His father had done great deeds with Monaltrie in Montrose's

wars, and he himself had fought with the Black Colonel at Killiecrankie and Cromdale. Indeed, Seumas was of opinion that if the Black Colonel had only succeeded Claverhouse in the command, the Revolution would have been crushed in the bud, and Righ Uilleam-na-gort (King William the Cruel) might, as he put it, "have packed up his pipes and trudged." Of this chief, of whose exploits the chroniclers have said nothing, although his native strath rings with his fame, Seumas Ruadh had many tales to relate, as we took our way together across the heather. How he had plundered the Lowland lairds and levied black-mail from Glenshee to Strathdon; how he had been burned out of his own house of Inverey by the red-coats, and had burned them out of Braemar Castle in return; how he had made a thousand hairbreadth escapes, and always broke out in some fresh raid when the Government troops thought they had him pressed to extremity; and how he would not

rest in his grave among his kinsfolk, after his death, until they had taken him up again and buried him beside the woman of his love. I listened to Seumas's tales with much interest, for was not this redoubtable hero my Bess's grandfather? I could not help conjecturing what Sir Robert and my father would say if these exploits, which certainly savoured a good deal of the doings of Robin Hood or Claude Duval, were to become part and parcel of the family annals of the Bardolphs.

By the time that Seumas had re-interred his old master, we were high up and crossing a broad moor, where the heather was short and crisp, and the peaty soil was broken by frequent patches of green moss. The great chain of hills south of the Dee, with Lochnagar in their centre, stood out clear and bold in the blue sky; and there were only a few white clouds flying about to break the azure expanse above us. Before us lay a low stony ridge, across which the wind blew freshly in our faces, and

when we could look about us from the top of that, Seumas opined that we might perhaps see some signs of deer.

But though the weather was propitious, the omens were against us. A hearty curse escaped from Seumas as a magpie rose from a bush before us and flew across our path down the wind.

"*Droch dhiol ort!*—bad usage to you for a bird. If I had had a bow by me, you should have had an arrow for company. It is few of McGillony's dun cattle we shall see this day, I'm thinking."

"And what are these cattle, Seumas?"

"Just the deer of the hills. McGillony, you must know, was a great hunter, and hunted the deer between Blair Atholl and Ben Macdhui in spite of earl and chief. I've seen his bothies mysel'; and when anybody asked him what he was doing among the hills, he would say, 'Oh, I'm just looking after my dun cattle;' and so we call the roes McGillony's cows for a by-word."

"And you think that magpie will cross our luck?"

"Take the good day early. Who won't venture shall not win," replied the oracular Seumas; "we have a burn to cross which may break the ill, and who knows what may be before us on the other side of the hill?"

We crossed the burn accordingly and began the ascent. The shoulder of the hill was strewed with rough grey stones, and sometimes we had to scramble across a bare bed of small loose stones, from which the peat-soil and heather had been washed away. As we neared the top Seumas advised that we should "gang warily," in case our sudden appearance on the crest should scare our quarry.

"We must stoop here and crawl," said Seumas, in a low tone; "and be careful with your piece, for a gun has often got a loose shot, as we say. It is my blessing on the brown bow that never did ill to its master. It is many a good buck the earn's feather has

laid low in Braemar—mair, I'm thinkin', than powder and shot will ever slay."

Seumas had in his youth been one of the "bowmen of Mar," and still retained his love for this ancient weapon, which, indeed, had its advantages in the hands of an expert deer-stealer, as giving no inconvenient alarm; and he told me how he had once shot a stag in Glen Derry when the Earl of Mar and his train were in full pursuit of the beast, and carried it away on his shoulders to a cave, without any one being ever the wiser.

We crouched down upon the brow of the hill among the short heather, well screened by a low bank covered with rushes and bent, and looked around us; while Seumas, with his hand shading his eyes, minutely scanned the scene before us with the practised vision of a hunter. Beneath us a hollow sloped down from the front of a hill opposite, widening as it descended, until it apparently was lost in the spreading skirts of the moor. To me there was no sign of life in the waste, nor

sound save the note of a plover wheeling high overhead. In this beat at least I seemed doomed to disappointment, and I turned my eyes away to sweep the grand amphitheatre of hills, flat brows, rugged peaks, broken crests, that hemmed in the view on every side. Benna-bourd was the nearest of the great mountains, its vast massy body ruling the prospect, though its summit was withdrawn from view; all the others a wild and bewildering confusion, over which, as the eye strays, it labours to arrange the different features in order, and to make out the different members of each particular mountain. The more you see of these grand strongholds of nature the deeper they impress you; and you master their forms only to find that their greatness has mastered your own mind.

Musing thus, *more meo*, I became sensible that Seumas was fidgeting. After peering intently from under the shade of his two hands, he crawled forward on his knees among the heather, again knelt at gaze, sometimes

casting a doubtful look back at me, and again resuming an attitude of close observation. Following his example of caution, I crawled forward to where he lay, and in a low voice asked him if he saw aught.

"No—that is, nothing to signify," he said, doubtfully; "and we will shoot nothing here, so I think we had better be going along the brow of the hill a bit."

But still he continued to look straight before him, with an expression in which anxiety seemed to be struggling with dread, reluctance with eagerness; and I closely scanned the moor in the same direction. All was lonesome as before; not a sign of life or motion broke the solitude. But stay, was there not something by that round green patch at the very top of the hollow? Was there a movement upon the heather at its edge, or was it my eyes strained with looking that had wavered in their vision? No, by heavens! there was something, and moving too. There it came out on the greensward, a

deer beyond all doubt, cropping the grass in undisturbed quiet.

"You see it, Seumas?" I whispered hurriedly, my blood now rising to fever-heat at the prospect of a successful shot, and of being able to acquit myself in the eyes of the Earl Marischal of being a mere Macaroni. "Don't you see a deer yonder?"

"I see something," said Seumas, doubtfully; "but what it may be, God He knows. Yon green patch is a geyan fleyit spot. It belongs to the good neighbours—that is, the fairies, as ye call them," sinking his voice to a scarcely audible whisper; "and he would be a bold man that would venture to shoot a deer there."

"Pooh, pooh, my good Seumas! an old soldier like you afraid of the fairies!"

"I would sooner strike a stag of ten tines under the castle windows, with the Earl himself looking out at me," said Seumas, solemnly, "than wave my hand at a roe in that corrie. Who knows gin the beast

be earthly or no? It may be one of the Cailleach Brattach's cattle, which she milks at midnight on the lone hill-tops. Let be, sir, and come away from this. I warrant we soon chance upon safer game."

"Stuff, Seumas; the bird in the hand, you know. Besides, I am leaving the country, and going where it will be difficult for the fairies to follow. Stay quietly here until I can get a shot at the deer, and then we shall see whether it is earthly or enchanted."

"*Am fear nach gabh comhairle gabhaidh e cam lorg*—he that will not take counsel will take but a 'bout road," said Seumas, with a groan; "but unless you fire at the beast with a silver bullet, you may as well shoot at the moon; but go, since ye must, and God and St Nathalan speed ye."

Leaving Seumas crouching among the heather, and muttering gloomily to himself, I descended the slope with the greatest caution, availing myself of the shelter of a ridge that ran down between me and my quarry. This

concealed me from view so far until I had reached the level of the heathery strip at the head of which lay the corrie. Here the approach was more difficult, and required more care, for I was within sight of the stag, which could scarcely fail to see me if he raised his head and looked about him. Crawling on hands and knees through the long heather, now lying down to rest at full length, concealed among the thick bushes, breathing for a brief minute behind a low bank of moss, I stealthily made my way onward, keeping my eyes constantly fixed upon the deer. Once or twice he raised his head and looked around, while I shrank cowering down close among the heather; and then, satisfied that his solitude was unbroken, again began to leisurely crop the herbage. I advanced nearer and nearer, and soon would be within gunshot of him. He was a magnificent animal; and as he stood at gaze, tossing his great antlers, and sniffing the wind haughtily, he seemed the very king of the waste. I could scarcely

control my eagerness, my heart panted with my exertions and excitement, and a fear came over me that I might fail at the supreme moment, or that the stag might actually, as Seumas had predicted, prove a grand illusion, and vanish at once into fairyland.

Between me and the stag was a low heathery mound, with a small cairn of loose grey stones on the top, and if I could but reach that unperceived, it seemed to me that I would have the stag within my fire. Towards this I slowly and painfully crept, fearing every instant that the deer would perceive me, and dash away up the hill. Twice he paused in his feeding, and gazed suspiciously around him; and then apparently satisfied as to his safety, resumed his eating.

The events that shortly followed have impressed that scene on my memory in recollections that will never fade. I can still see that noble stag, and the maddening desire to lay him low comes back as fresh to my mind as it did, how many years ago! I never had over-

much of the hunter's instinct for slaughtering his fellow-brutes; and though I was wont to shoot my fallows and stubble, more for the relish of fresh air and exercise than for sport I imagine, I did not much regret when years and more ample proportions gave me a fair excuse for delegating that duty to my game-keeper. But then the true ardour of the deer-slayer, that spirit which makes the sport to him the noblest that earth has to offer, had full sway over me, and my eagerness transported me far beyond myself.

At last I reached the hillock, and, after lying breathlessly for a moment on the side trying to compose myself and steady my aim, I crawled up to the top and looked over. There stood the stag grazing unconcernedly, and all unconscious of danger. Carefully examining my flint and my priming, I put my gun forward, and crawling a little higher up, I rested it over a stone and prepared to take aim. My eyes were all for the stag; but just then I could see that sleeping in a little green hollow on the

other side of the mound were three wild-looking Highlanders directly under me. At another time this sight might have made me pause, mindful about the adage regarding sleeping dogs; but just at this instant the deer tossed his head aloft and curiously sniffed the air, while he beat the ground impatiently with a fore-foot. In another instant he would take to the hill—and I fired.

Simultaneously with the report arose a wild yell from beneath me, and the three kern, starting to their feet and seizing their swords, which had been lying bare beside them, looked about them in bewilderment. I was able to cast one glance towards the corrie, and saw that the stag had fallen near the top of it; but my attention was speedily claimed by the hostile demeanour of my unexpected neighbours. They came out of the hollow and, standing on the opposite side, began to talk together, casting ominous glances in my direction the while. Grasping my gun firmly by the barrel, I gave one glance behind me to

where I had left Seumas, and to my great relief saw him coming running through the heather with incredible speed for a man of his years, shouting and gesticulating as he ran, but whether to me or the kern it was impossible to make out. But our parley was of the briefest. One of the men, a tall fellow armed with sword and target, who was evidently encouraging his comrades to fall upon me, dashed round the side of the hollow.

"It's the Sassenach that killed Macgregor of Balfad," he cried; "come, ye cowards! what are ye fleyit for? He's but a hornless nowt on a strange loan. Make in upon him."

Unarmed as I was, except for my empty gun and a short hunting-knife, the odds of three to one were too heavy to contend with. Immediately I was engaged with the whole three, and though I did my best to defend myself with my clubbed gun, the struggle was of the briefest. One fellow I prostrated with a swinging blow from the butt-end of my gun, and leaping back sought to fell the

leader; but he with his target received and turned my blows, while his comrade put an end to the contest by running his claymore into my body up to the hilt. I have a confused memory of seeing the hills reeling round about me, two men wildly flying from me, and Seumas breathlessly running to my aid, when I sank senseless on the ground beside the body of the prostrate kern.

When I came to myself I found Seumas had propped me up against a stone, and was pouring spirits down my throat from a capacious ram's-horn which he carried at his belt. He next proceeded to tear open my waistcoat and shirt and examine my wound, which I felt was bleeding profusely, and the grass and heather around me were already dyed by the stream.

"Ochone, ochone!" Seumas was saying, "and this it is that comes of meddling with the cattle of the good neighbours. Better never befell of it. And what will the Earl Marischal say? It is a sorrowful man he will be when he hears of this, and he will say, 'Did I not

put the Sassenach gentleman in your hands, Seumas Roy Oig?' and it will be but a step to the dule-tree at Castletown for Seumas. Ochone, ochone! and are you sore hurtit?"

"I am very faint, Seumas," I groaned; "but whether mortally wounded or not I cannot tell. If you could only stop this blood."

"To be sure, and she'll do her best," said Seumas, and after a hurried search through the heather he came back with a handful of leaves, which he began to chew vigorously; and then taking them from his mouth, he applied this extemporised poultice to my wound, and with his long scarf bound it round my body. He then poured some more spirits down my throat, and I felt considerably revived.

"How am I to get out of this, Seumas? I shall die if I am left here."

"Troth," said Seumas, "and that is the bit. I'm thinking I could run quickly back to the Earl, and get men to bear ye hame in a litter, if ye would bide quietly here until I come back."

"Not much fear of my stirring, Seumas," I said, with a faint smile. "You will find me here, dead or alive, on your return, for certain."

"I could carry ye on my back for that matter; but the joggling would be sore, and bad for the wound. Take a small drop more of the drink, and I'll even leave the ram's-horn handy by ye."

"Is he dead, Seumas?" I asked, as my eye fell upon the body of the fallen kern a few feet from me.

"No' yet," responded Seumas, calmly, "but a broken bannock is as good as eaten; and," as he drew out his dirk and ran his finger along the edge, "I'se ensure him no steering ye mair."

"Seumas," I gasped, as I saw him bend over the prostrate man, "for shame!" but the dirk flashed in the air, and with a groan the fellow turned over, stabbed through the heart.

"How could I have answered to my lord if I had left a man alive that had raised his hand against you?" asked Seumas, as he saw my

disgust. "Sang! but I will have enough to do to keep my own craig from the withy for this disaster; but your honour will bear witness that I warned ye."

"Certainly, my good Seumas — no harm shall come to you that I can help; and now, if you will go for bearers, and let me get out of this wilderness."

Seumas propped me up a little more, pulled off his own coat and placed it between my head and its stony support, put more freshly chewed leaves on the wound, and adjuring me to apply to the ram's-horn if I felt a "dwam" coming on, girt up his loins, blessed me in Gaelic, and ran off through the heather. Languidly my eyes followed him as a figure seen in a dream, and I saw not one but twenty Seumases, bobbing about like black dots upon the moor, while the body at my feet increased and multiplied until the ground around me was covered with twenty thousand corpses. A black cloud seemed to fall upon me, blotting out the hills and obscuring the daylight; but

through the darkness I could see once more the dome of St Paul's, and hear the bustle of London streets. I was wearily wandering on and on, seeking some one, I knew not whom, when just under Temple Bar I was beset by a mingled mob of Mohocks and Highlandmen, smitten to the ground, and left trampled upon and bleeding on the pavement for dead. And after this all was darkness and oblivion; and it seemed to me as if I was already dead, and only waiting for my burial to be put under the earth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

My next clear recollection was of waking from a heavy slumber, while the rays of an afternoon sunshine were playing upon the window-panes. I was in bed, and when I strove to raise myself to look about me, so feeble was I that I fell back upon the pillow with the first effort. I had been ill, then; but for how long, where I was, and what had been the matter with me, were dim mysteries that my brain was unable even to try to solve.

Gradually, as I lay there striving to think—and the very effort at thinking was oppressive—I grasped some facts from the past that helped to revive recollection. Like the memory of a dream, the encounter upon the hill came back to me; and as I shut my eyes, I could see

Seumas racing across the heather for help, and the body of the slain Highlander lying at my feet;—see the hills, too, as they reeled vaguely about me at the instant I began to lose my consciousness. My wound came back to me. Seumas had succeeded in getting me taken somewhere, but where I was I had not the least idea.

Then came back impressions that evidently were more recent than my wound. Surely I had been in London, had been back in my old place in the House of Commons, and heard Shippen denouncing the succession, and Walpole, with cutting retort, maligning the Jacobites and lauding disinterested patriotism. My mother, too, had bent over my sick-bed, had raised my head, and poured a cooling potion down my burning throat. And there were other and more extraordinary scenes that I had lived through. I had been with Lord Mar and taken part in a wild battle in the middle of a Highland pass, charging among the clansmen at a regiment of the Horse

Guards. But that was impossible. I must have been dreaming, delirious, and in my weakened state I was unable to discriminate between the visions of my sick brain and what had actually taken place; and exhausted with the task, I once more fell asleep.

But this time I did not sleep long. The setting sunbeams still lightened the window, and coming into the room, shone upon the grotesquely carved oak panelling at the foot of my bed. The room seemed quite familiar, and yet its appearance did not serve to recall to me where I was. Could I be at home again in the old Rectory? The thought was sweet to me, and made life again pulse through my veins. But that was impossible: the long distance, the sea journey, I could never have made it unconsciously, even if I could have survived. No; I must be somewhere in Scotland, in Braemar. Where, then, was Meston? where the Earl Marischal, with whom I had gone a-hunting? AND WHERE WAS BESS? With this thought a flood of recollections

poured in upon me. It was my old room at Balmoral. "Bess!" I cried, as I endeavoured to raise myself up. "Bess!" and again I fell back in my weakness.

Slowly the door opened, and a figure peered into the room. Not Bess certainly, but a man, grim, gaunt, and ungainly. He came cautiously up to my bedside, and bent over me with doubtful looks. Assisted by the progress that I had already made in recognition, the man's face and figure gradually suggested to me the idea of Meston's servant, at whose uncouth appearance and quaint manners I had so often laughed.

"What, David? David Webster?" I managed to say. "Where is your master, the Professor? And how came I here?"

"Even feet foremost," quoth David; "and, by my saul! it seemed mair nor probable till yesterday at meridian that ye wad gang oot again the same way as ye cam' in."

"I have been seriously ill, then?"

"Ill! Ye hae been at death's door, and

stark stare ravin' mad forbye. No' a word o' sense has passed yer mooth the haill time; but ye wad aye keep on cryin' oot aboot Parliament and Hielandmen and women, evil subjects a' o' them, I trow, for deathbed meditations. And ance ye thocht ye were fechtin', and lap oot o' bed ned-nakit, and wad hae doon the stair a'maist in spite o' me. A sair tyaave I had to get ye tae yer bed again."

"And your master—Meston—where is he?"

"He is governin' Dunottar Castle, and raisin' cess an' contributions roond the haill kintra-side—glackin' his mitten, nae doot, as behuves a prudent man—nae to say that he ever had prudence save when I was at his lug. Here am I keepit here to be a nourrice-tender, when I might hae been livin' wi' my maister at heck an' manger in the Mearns. Wi' sae muckle ruggin' an' rivin' gaein' on, the deil's in it gin I cudna hae gotten my nain hand in."

"Your trouble shall be well rewarded, David. You shall not find me ungrateful

for your attention. And now, what news of the army?"

"Troth, but little that is gude. Donald Shaw, that came here a week was ago wi' a message frae the laird tae the leddy, said Mar was jist daidlin' at Perth to gie the Duke o' Argyll time to collect the Whigs in full eneuch force to beat him. A'm thinkin' he'll be but gey feckless i' the field, the Yearl o' Mar will."

"And how long have I been here? What day of the month is this?"

"It is just the twenty-feifth day o' October, o' a' days in the year," returned David, tersely.

Good heavens! I had lost more than a month then. It was in the middle of September, the day after Mar marched, when I had met with my disaster, and all the interval was a complete blank to me, save for confused memories of visions that must have crowded about my sick brain. And had Bess seen me? Had she stood by my couch and smoothed my pillow? Had she been tortured by the fears

that I was going to die, and had it been her prayers that had recalled me from the brink of the grave? Oh, to see her now, if only for an instant—to feel her hand upon my fevered brow! There would be healing in her touch, and I would arise from my sick-bed a whole man. "Did the ladies ever come to see me, David, when I was ill?"

"See you!—weel I wot they saw ye, for the tane or the tither o' them has been hardly ever awa' frae yer bedside, except when they were lying doun or takin' their meat as it were. See ye! Troth, they sometimes saw mair nor they were seekin' to see," continued David, distorting his mouth into a grim smile. "When ye took the auld leddy round the hause, and ca'ed her yer bonnie Bess, yer darlin', an' yer doo, I thocht young Mistress Farquharson wad hae sunk thro' the fleer for perfect shame; but, by my sang! the auld leddy sorted her for haein' ony traffic wi' a gangrel Englisher like yersel'."

"The devil!" I involuntarily groaned,

maddened at the heart that I should have betrayed my secret thus to Bess's mother.

"Weel, that is just what the auld leddy said; for when ye ga'ed on ravin' week aifter week, an' growin' nae better, naethin' wad sair her but ye war possessed—for ye maun ken that the mither o' ane o' thae chiels that ye felled in the hill is a notour witch, an cam' here cursin' ye. And sae naething else wad dae than the leddy Balmoral wad hae the minister body frae across the water tae pray for ye, as tho' the Lord wad be bathered listenin' tae a Whig an' a Presbyterian. A'm thinkin' it wad be a sinless saul that *he* wad save, an' a sober deil that he wad fleg.

"But," quoth David, "ye are speakin' ower muckle, an' that is contrar' to rules, sae ye'll even drink this powsowdie that Mistress Bess made for ye, and gae cannily to sleep again. Troth, an' it's no bad to tak' onyhow; there is some sweet wine in it."

Having performed the office of taster with evident relish, David put the silver jug to

my lips, and as weariness was already stealing over me, I drank a long cooling draught, and presently was asleep again.

It was in the fresh morning light that I next awoke, and after a night's peaceful sleep I felt much refreshed, clearer in mind, and with a feeling of greater strength. Raising my head I could see through the window the sky-line of brown hill-ridges beyond the Dee, and I longed to get up and go out once more into the fresh air. But the merest exertion showed how weak I was, and that it would be some time yet before I could leave my bed. But I had desire for food, I suppose for the first time since I had been laid down, and I called for David in as loud a voice as I could summon up.

When the door opened I scarcely raised my head to look at David's entrance; and it was not until I had lifted up my eyes, and beheld the sweetest of all sweet faces bending over me between tears and smiles, that I was aware who had answered my call. Shall I blush to

say that, ill and weakened as I was, and my mind overcharged with blissful excitement, I burst into tears, as I clasped the also weeping Bess to my bosom? For some time no word passed between us. Our silence, our embraces, our kisses, said far more to each of us in a few minutes than hours of talk could have told, as Bess, without a word, unfolded the agony and anxiety which she had suffered for me, and the new-born hope and prospect of happiness that had sprung up in her heart. When soul thus speaks to soul, there is eloquence beyond the reach of utterance, especially when love acts as interpreter. Speech is the least and the feeblest part of love-making, when it is earnest, for we only feel its incapacity when we come to measure it with passion. So silence served well with Bess and me to let each know all that was in the other's mind.

At last Bess said: "I have letters for you—letters from London, and from the camp—but you could not read them, and we could only

keep them until you came to yourself. And, oh, the terrible thoughts during all those weeks of illness, every time that I looked at them, that perhaps you might never be able to open them! And there was no one that could give me comfort, no one to tell me that you might live."

"But I shall live—I shall live for you. I felt you brought life to me when you came in. But I have been long unconscious, and have lost all count of time. What news is there of the army?"

"Nothing of moment. The Earl of Mar and his men are still lying about Perth, where they are raising recruits and levying contributions among the Perth and Angus people. A messenger came through the hills from my father a day or two ago, to say that they were all well, and expecting to march against Argyll and the English in a few days."

"And is there any news from England?"

"We only hear that the Brigadier of Borlum, and the Macintoshes, and our own men,

with some of the southern lords, were crossing the Border to join the Earl of Derwentwater, who has got a large army together, and is proclaiming King James all over the north of England."

"And is there no news of a descent from France?—no word of the Duke of Berwick or Ormond landing in England?"

"We have heard of none; but here we are so cut off from the world that we only learn by accident of what is going on beyond the hills, and seldom until long after. King James may have got the whole of England by this time for aught we can tell; but your letters may give you news, and I shall leave you to read them: for you must not speak, but keep very quiet. My mother says that you may get back your strength; and, indeed, had she not gone up to one of the cottar-houses to see an unwell child, I should not have come to you. She would be very angry if she thought I had disturbed you."

"But stay, Bess, stay!" I cried, endeavour-

ing to hold out my arms to detain her. With a coquettish smile and a coy shake of the head she was gone, however, and I once more leaned back upon my pillow.

I lay in restful thought, with my letters in my hand, half fearing to dispel the pleasure that Bess's presence had brought me by ill news. The insurrection had become to me a far-away idea, since I could take no active part in it, and my world just then seemed to be bounded by the four walls of Balmoral. But I might just as well see what news my correspondence brought me. There was a packet from my uncle Thirlwall containing a letter from my father, and another which, from the handwriting, I divined to be from my friend the Professor. The latter, as the less important, I read first. Meston assured me that he had been grievously distressed to leave me behind him, and that nothing but the fact that I could not have survived the journey, and that he was leaving me in sure and kindly hands, would have prevented him

from endeavouring to carry me with him to Dunottar. He trusted I was mending of the mischance that I had sustained, and conjured me, as I valued my recovery, to resist the pernicious potions with which the lady Balmoral would doubtless seek to dose me. The dame was an excellent woman (*matrona nimium bona*), but over superstitious, and prone to dabble in ignorant cures.

"But an' Mistress Bess, whom I lovingly greet, be permitted to tend you (*blanditiæ noctis placidissima cura diei*), I believe that convalescence will ensue before you wish for it.

"As touching the circumstances of his Majesty's affairs, I have but little to say, except that they proceed satisfactorily in Northumberland and Cumberland under Derwentwater and Mr Forster, whom a body of our Scots are marching to join; and that the E—— of M—— dallieth at Capua—in other words, at St Johnstoun—and showeth no disposition to

push on, which hath given Argyll time to get together an army under his command, that is even now marching northward to meet him. The Farquharsons are gone south with Borlum to join Derwentwater; but Balmoral, as aide-de-camp, still abides at Perth with the Lieutenant-General; also your dear friend George of Coldrach, who is levying the king's cess on the Fifeshire lairds. As for your most humble servant, he hath the command of this ancient fortress of Dunottar (*domicilium natura loci firmissimum*, as Bishop Leslie well describes it), and will defend it, while the vivers last, despite all the force that the Elector may send against it. Providence hath already blessed our arms with a notable victory, through my humble instrumentality. A Dutch *schouyt*, driven out of her course by a southerly tempest, had to take shelter in our harbour of Stonehive, and on boarding her we found her cargo to consist of excellent Rhenish and some barrels of prime Hollands, which we confiscated in the king's name as contraband of war, and

have clapt the Hoggan-moggans into the Whigs' vault, until such time as we learn the Earl Marischal's and his Majesty's pleasure concerning them. I would right gladly have sent you a runlet or two; but in respect that the road across the hills is difficult, and the accompanying packet, which Captain John Nepper hath handed to me for you, is urgent, I shall wait for you to pree it here when your health will allow you to make the journey, which I pray may be soon.

'Non ego sanius
Bacchabor Edonis; recepto
Dulce mihi furere est amico.'

"Trusting that you may be safely delivered from the dirks of the Macgregors, and the not less deadly darts of Cupid, I remain, your brother in the Nine,

"Gul. Meston, *Castellanus*,
"*Nuper Reg. in Acad. Mariscallā.*"

Turning from my whimsical friend's epistle to my uncle's letter, I found little in it save a

complaint that he had received no tidings of me, nor no news of the prospects of Lord Mar's expedition, which was known in London to have taken the field. He had been able to get no intelligence of my movements since I had landed in Aberdeen, and knew not whether I had ever reached Braemar or not. Inquiries he understood had been made regarding me by the Elector's Government; but my name had not appeared among the proscribed, a long list of whom had been published. The news from the north of England was very reassuring, and he and his friends were willing to aid the Earl of Mar with a considerable subsidy as soon as I advised them to do so. But he entreated me to write speedily and relieve his mind, as well about my own safety as about the position of the king's affairs in Scotland.

My father's letters, too, were full of apprehensions about my safety. A king's messenger had inquired about me at Culmford, and wished to know if I had gone north to join Derwentwater, which my father had been able

to solemnly assure him I had not done. The amity which I had happily established between the Rectory and the Manor House still continued, but there would doubtless be as usual, my father feared, the annual unpleasantness about the tithes. In any less matter, my father said, he would gladly have given way rather than run the risk of marring the re-established harmony; but his conscience would not allow him to see the Church deprived of her full dues while he was Rector of Culmford. My mother had been made uneasy by rumours which had reached her about some Scotswoman whom I had been following after in London, and trusted that I was not likely to fall in with her in my travels. Though my father did not trouble himself about idle gossip, he too did not think much of Scotswomen, who were but uncultivated creatures, and generally imbued with the Presbyterian pravity. My uncle was always anxiously asking about me and about my return : he and his wife had got it into their heads that the child had missed me

and fretted for me, which was folly; but they doated as much as ever upon it, though it was still but a weeny thing, seldom a week without an ailment of some kind. He hoped I would take care of myself, and not be too forward if fighting was going on, for it looked as likely as not that the continuance of the family of Bardolph might still depend upon me.

Exhausted by reading these epistles, and the thoughts they suggested, I lay back and once more slept.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This was the beginning of my convalescence, but it was still some weeks before I was able to rise from my bed and struggle down-stairs with the assistance of David Webster, or, better still, the tender aid of Bess's arm. And in the interval, I had many visits in my room from my hostess, who would take no thanks for her kindness and hospitality to a sick stranger, but was disposed to take full credit for the results of her skill and potions in bringing me round. If David was telling the truth, and I had betrayed my passion for Bess to the mother in my delirium, the prudent woman was careful to give no sign of her intelligence, nor did she impose much restraint upon Bess's coming to my sick-room to administer the

draughts and broths which the lady Balmoral had prepared.

"It was just a blessing that that fule body o' a Professor had to gae his ways," said the hostess, the first day I was able to get downstairs. "What wi' his Latin drugs and his lances, ye would have been in the mools in Crathie kirkyaird by this time, I'm thinking, Mr Bardolph."

"At least I felt no want of him," I responded. "Your potions, lady Balmoral, seem to work like magic, and never man had kinder or more careful nursing. It would really have been inexcusable on my part if I had not got better. I am thoroughly ashamed that I gave you so much trouble—you and Mistress Bess."

"Oh, we women in Braemar are well used to tending wounds, and would need to be so, for I am sure they come often enough in our way—ower often in thae troublous times. And as for Bess—it will be a useful lesson to her, for George of Coldrach is gey rash,

and maist likely to be in the throng when broken crouns are a-gaein'."

I bit my lip and said nothing, though I longed to have it out with my hostess about this marriage, and to denounce the sacrifice of the happiness of her only child; and the lady Balmoral, as if dreading that I might follow up the opening she had unguardedly—perhaps intentionally—afforded, soon after left the room to attend to household cares.

When I was able to crawl out of doors, what a change met my eyes! I had last seen the hills in the full flush of the purple glory of autumn—now the first touches of an early winter were visibly impressed upon them. The heather was become of a sombre brown; the green hollows and banks of the small streamlets were seared and grey; the leaves of the birch, now turned to a dull brown, were falling from the trees; and the pines had lost the lively green of summer, and now stood out dark and melancholy, moaning in the blustering breezes that swept down the

glen. The voice of the Dee was hoarse, and its waters no longer reflected a clear blue sky, but ran dull and wan between its faded banks. A pale watery sunshine did not serve to warm the bare and sallow hill-tops, that seemed more lonely than ever, and that now loomed over the Strath more remotely, it seemed, and in greater solitude than before. The soft and grandly caressing mood in which Nature had been when I last cast my eyes upon her in this valley, had now given way to a graver, a more stern aspect. It was as if for a time she were retiring within herself, and man were left more solitary in consequence.

The glen, too, presented a striking contrast to the scene of life and motion which it had exhibited when I had last looked upon it. The sound of the bagpipes and the song of the milkmaids were mute; there were no martial parties traversing the hills in their picturesque garb, with banner and flashing steel. Even the cattle had disappeared, save here and there a solitary cow, lowing as it cropped some little

patch of withered grass, or roamed disconsolately through the heather in search of more toothsome forage. Only old men or matrons were to be seen about the cottage doors, all moving slowly and wearily, as if under the shadow of some great calamity. No flag waved from the white turrets of Monaltrie across the Dee, nor was there any sign of life about the castle. The silence of a deep anxiety had fallen upon the valley, and Nature seemed as if she shared in the solicitude of her children.

News—news from the army, tidings of father or son or brother or lover — was the first thought in the morning and the last wish at night with all who had been left in the Strath. If a man appeared upon the road, or was seen descending any of the glen footpaths that led from the passes of the Grampians, from castle and cottage every one came out of doors and waited impatiently for his coming, while some of the more eager would run to meet and question him. If he came from Lord Mar's camp,

or had even seen the army, he was soon surrounded by every one in the Strath, old and young, and questioned minutely about friends whom perhaps he had never seen, and movements which he knew nothing about; and the intelligence which he was able to afford formed the whole talk of the people until the next traveller appeared. The consternation was great in the glen when the news came that the Farquharsons had marched south to England under Invercauld; and though to thrifty housewives the prospect of plunder which their imaginations saw in their ideas of English wealth offered some compensation, yet there was something alarming in the feeling that their men had quitted Scottish soil and gone into a foreign and hostile country. They experienced very much the same feelings as we who know more of the world have when we are told that some of our friends and relations have gone to serve in the Indies—a doubtful prospect of ever seeing them return from such remote climes.

Things were in this state when the news arrived that the battle of Sheriffmuir had been fought and won by Mar, as we were at first informed; but as it afterwards came out, with but little advantage on either side. It was on a keen frosty morning in the beginning of November, when the sun was rising dusky red among the fog that hung over the hills, that a man on a rough pony was seen coming quickly down the road from the Genechal. The family and servants at Balmoral all turned out to wait for his approach, the cottars crowded up to the castle door, and in an incredibly short time old men and women from the Monaltrie side — most of whom had waded across the Dee without waiting for the boat — were also gathered. The messenger was Callum Brown, a vassal of Balmoral's, who had been sent to report the victory, and to try and pick up some recruits to take south with him.

Certainly the fight as described by Callum clearly left the impression that the Earl of

Mar had beaten the Hanoverians. Callum, who had fought among the clans in the right wing of Mar's army, could only give an account of what he had actually taken part in. The first volley from the English line had killed both the Earl of Strathmore and the Captain of Clanranald; and the Highlanders, almost taking the word from Mar's mouth, had replied with a fire that made the English foot swerve in their ranks; then, throwing away their muskets, they had rushed upon them with the broadsword with a fury that had swept the infantry back in confusion among the dragoons; and in little more than five minutes, the whole of Argyll's left wing was broken and dispersed, and General Wightman and his five squadrons of dragoons retreating on the spur to Dunblane. On Mar's left, however, the action had not been so successful. Its first fire had thrown the enemy into some confusion, but the cavalry came to their support, and drove back Mar's foot; and though they turned again and again to face

the horse, they had to fall back, although the Angus and Mearns troopers under the Earl Marischal had made gallant efforts to aid them in rallying. But that King James had won the battle Callum had no doubt, for he had a printed paper signed by the Earl of Mar saying so; and Callum handed me the document, which I read aloud for the information of the gathering. But though it enlarged on the glorious victory that had blessed his Majesty King James's arms, it said little about results; and what was even more significant, it was issued at Perth, whither the Earl had deemed it wise to fall back. Callum then presented his letters, among which there was one to me from the Lieutenant-General himself.

There was little in Mar's epistle. He condoled with me on my accident, and assured me of ample vengeance on the Macgregors of the Smoke, whom he swore to root out, man, woman, and child, on his return to Braemar. He dwelt in a few sentences on the victory

of Sheriffmuir, which had struck such panic, he said, into the English regiments that they would never again dare to face a charge of Highlanders. He was waiting for Seaforth, from whom he expected to hear every day that he was on the march to join him with 7000 men. Everything was going on well in England, where Derwentwater and Forster were advancing to meet Carpenter and drive him back to London. Meanwhile, had I no news of supplies from my uncle and the other London merchants? For their own sakes he would wish that they were somewhat more prompt with their benevolence towards his Majesty, for King James, he had certain assurance, was already on his way to Scotland.

The lady Balmoral had ordered bread and cheese and usquebaugh to be distributed in honour of the battle, and Callum became the great centre of interest, telling every one all that he knew about their friends and their bearing in the field. The only cloud that darkened the general joy was the unsatis-

factory accounts that he gave about the spoil or "spulzie," of which it appeared that none had been forthcoming—a circumstance that occasioned grave doubts among the older Highlanders whether the victory had been as complete as Callum would have them believe. There was the printed paper, Callum urged in defence, and print could not lie—a plea that the ancient Mar men, who had never heard of Grub Street, and were ignorant of the names of Curll or Osborne, had to yield to, though they knew not well what to make of it. But they generally felt a poorer opinion of the Earl of Mar, for never had the Black Colonel been known to worst the Sassenach, but there was spulzie galore for both himself and his followers to bring back to Braemar. This, however, was but unprofitable fighting, of which little good could be expected.

I suspect that lady Balmoral's letter contained cautions about myself, for I detected the good dame casting several furtive glances at me while she read, and guiltily dropping

her eyes again on the paper as they encountered mine. But she read to me several passages, in which Balmoral gave guarded expression to his disappointment with the Earl's tactics, especially his indecision and want of energy, which were disheartening the clans, and allowing the enemy time to recover themselves. Unless King James himself speedily came to give his followers heart and lead them to victory, or the rising in the south succeeded in keeping back reinforcements of the Elector's troops from reaching Scotland, Balmoral feared there would be nothing else for it except to fall back beyond the passes,—and how the force was to be subsisted heaven only knew.

I again wrote my uncle, giving him as clear a view of the situation as I could gather from hearsay, and I more frankly expressed the doubts, that I had felt all along, about Lord Mar's capacity as a leader. I feared that he would not be able to keep the clans together; but if he succeeded in doing so until

King James's arrival, a fresh enthusiasm might be added to the cause. As to Lord Mar's prayer for a subsidy, I would neither recommend nor dissuade; but I thought if there were any money to be contributed it would be better to wait until the king's arrival.

This letter I despatched by my friend Seumas, who came frequently to Balmoral to inquire for me, with orders to give it to Convener Lindsay, my uncle's agent in Aberdeen; and Seumas promptly executed his commission, thinking nothing about walking the distance of nearly fifty miles in one day, notwithstanding his years. Seumas returned the next evening, showing no marks of fatigue from his hundred miles' journey, though considerable signs of liquor, with which he had refreshed himself in drinking the king's health at Tibbie McVey's in Charlestown of Aboyne. He had found Mr Lindsay convener no longer, for a new magistracy, devoted to King James, had been appointed, and that gentleman had undertaken that my letter

should be duly forwarded, and had sent me back the most recent London newspapers that had reached Aberdeen. Among other items, they contained King George's proclamation denouncing King James's cause as "a most horrid and treacherous conspiracy." They told that some London cavalry had been reviewed in Tuttle Fields, "without so much as one man falling from the saddle." They spoke of a camp being formed in Hyde Park, which seemed to give more entertainment to the ladies than promise of safety to the Crown. All the while the Londoners seemed to be going on as I had left them—Jacobites and Tories burning King William's effigy the one day, and the Whigs retaliating the next by burning those of Bolingbroke and Ormond, with much of mobbing and quarrelling in coffee-houses. But for any news that would throw clear light on the prospects of contending parties or the affections of the country, Grub Street seemed as much at a loss as Braemar. These items of London intelligence

sounded very faintly and remote when read amid the solitude and silence of the great hills. It was like news from another world.

All the while I was steadily courting lady Balmoral for the sake of her daughter. If ever passive obedience to medical treatment merited a woman's favour, I may declare, without boasting, that I ought to have stood high in the lady Balmoral's good graces. I believe I drank decoctions of every herb in hill and valley, sweet or nasty, which was known to my hostess; and when her own knowledge ran dry, she obtained other potions from "skilly women" who were little better than witches, and depended more upon the charms and incantations with which their drugs were prepared than upon their essential effects. It is true that sometimes I escaped with a pretence of having taken my draughts, but lady Balmoral was suspicious enough to generally administer them herself. And I attended her assiduously, kept her amused as well as I could, flattered her on all assailable sides, and

had the reward of seeing, as my convalescence increased, that I had made my company really indispensable to the good lady—so much so that Bess grew petulant at my devoting so much time to her parent, and seemed almost to be jealous of her own mother.

"It is but lost labour," she said; "my mother likes to have you to nurse and to give physic to, and she likes well enough to have you whistling in her lug; but tell her that you want Bess Farquharson for a wife, and you will see the other side of her tongue."

This was exactly what I wanted to tell the lady Balmoral: but I was always hoping that some specially favourable opportunity might be afforded for broaching the subject; that something might happen to secure me a more favourable hearing; and I was likewise afraid to break up the present happy intercourse that I enjoyed with Bess. Never a day passed since I had been able to leave my room that we had not been able to have long and sweet talks. She helped me out of doors, to walk

among the birches and down to the bank of the Dee, and the mother showed no inclination to keep us apart. Probably she thought that her daughter's future was fixed beyond the possibility of disturbance, and that the engagement with George of Coldrach was fixed as a Median or Persian law. Perhaps the generous views of hospitality, which are so strong in the Highlands, prevented her from showing any symptoms of uneasiness or distrust of a guest. At all events she placed no embargo upon Bess and me, and we did not fail to make good use of our opportunities for becoming acquainted with each other's hearts, and confirming our mutual vows. One day I thought I had caught my hostess, lady Balmoral, in high good humour, having been all the forenoon engaged in doctoring the wife of one of her cottars, whose ailments had defied the most potent charms that the witch of Craiguise could bring to bear upon them. She had just prepared a dose of roots and herbs for myself, when a strong impulse

came over me that now might be a favourable time to break the ice.

"Really, it is quite absurd of me to set up as an invalid longer. I walked down to the river-bank all by myself to-day, and felt quite strong enough to have walked double the distance."

"I saw you, and you seem but gey frail yet; it will be a good month before you can venture to mount a horse. And so content yourself and take your physic."

"My dear good hostess," said I, taking her caressingly by the arm, "don't you see that while you are curing me with the one hand you are killing me with the other? You are too wise not to have seen how I love your daughter, and that she loves me in return. Why not give us your kind consent, and promise to plead our cause with the laird? You can easily prevail with him, if you set yourself to do it."

"Na, na," said the lady, hastily withdrawing herself, "that canna be. Both the laird and

myself have passed our words to George of Coldrach, and there is no drawing back. And besides, Mr Bardolph, you're just deceiving yourself. Because you are shut up in a lonely auld house in the heart of the hills, and nae ane to speak to forbye an auld wife, except a young lassie—weel enough favoured, I'se allow—ye maun just fancy you're fond of her. Wait till ye get among your ain folk, and you'll soon find oot your folly, and be thankful enow that the auld dame o' Balmoral did not seek to saddle you wi' her dochter."

"But, my dear lady Balmoral, you quite misunderstand my nature; you misjudge my feelings. I loved your daughter from the minute that I first looked upon her fainting face in London streets, and to follow her here and obtain your consent was more than half my errand to Scotland. Think, I beseech you, of your daughter's happiness. I have Bess's word for it that she does not want to marry George of Coldrach—that she loves me alone—that she has never loved any one else."

"Lassies seldom ken a' their ain minds. Mony a maiden gangs hame to her man's house wi' the tear in her e'e and her heart fou o' thochts o' anither, that lives to find hersel' gey bien and comfortable and happy in the love o' husband and bairns. Ye're baith young, and will speedily forget this daft nonsense."

"Never, lady Balmoral—never while I live; and I may venture to say the same for Bess."

"Troth, then, you venture ower muckle. Ye needna think an only dochter, as sonsie and bonnie as my Bess, hasna had her heart tried lang afore ye cam' upon the carpet. There was Finlay of Auchriachan, and young M'Gregor of Tir Igny, and the Laird of Leochiel's eldest son——"

"Stop, stop," I cried, determined to remain ignorant of Bess's imputed flirtations, of which, whether real or imaginary, my hostess seemed to have a lengthy catalogue. "I am assured of Bess's love for myself, and that to me is all-sufficient. And I do not think, lady Balmoral, that

you can consider me an unequal match even for so honourable and distinguished a family as your own. We are of the direct line of the Lords Bardolph, and the title may be revived in my favour if the king comes by his own. I am almost certain of succeeding one day to my uncle's baronetcy, for there is no prospect of his only child surviving its infancy. And in the meantime——"

"I never fashed myself about these things. But we have no son, and the man who marries Bess Farquharson must even be content to make his home at Balmoral and keep up the auld roof-tree. I'm thinkin' a man like you, that has been sae het brocht up in courts and cities, would be little likely to relish the prospect of setting out to drive off the cateran in a drifty night, wi' a kilt on your hurdies."

"A kilt!" I exclaimed; "I shall go out with nothing but paint, like an ancient Pict, if you give me Bess to wife."

"No, Mr Bardolph, that cannot be. You may ask the laird, if you like, and he will

just tell you the same as I do. The matter is settled for good and all; and although I have allowed you to gallant about with Bess, just because you are our guest and saved her life, you must not fancy that I have not had my eyes about me. So I hope that you will think no more of such folly, and that you will find a good wife waiting you in your own country. I wot weel ye deserve a good one."

And with this compliment, which was vainly intended to mollify her refusal, the lady Balmoral broke up the interview.

Next time I encountered Bess her eyes were red with weeping, and she confessed that her mother had fallen foul of her for "'ticing" me and giving me encouragement, when she was the promised wife of George of Coldrach. "But I shall never marry George of Coldrach," sobbed Bess; "never, though they take me before the minister tied to him with ropes. My tongue shall never say the words that will make me George of Coldrach's wife."

"Do you think I would have better speed

with Balmoral himself than with your mother? The laird loves you, and has a tender heart."

"No: it is of no use," said Bess, shaking her head; "he has passed his word to Inverey and Auchindryne, and would never go back from it. But I shall not marry him. I shall never marry any one."

"By heavens! but you shall, Bess," I excitedly exclaimed. "You are my promised bride. I shall have you in spite of father and mother, and all the Coldrachs in Christendom. You must come with me, Bess. We shall get married by the first clergyman we come to, and once we are man and wife, your parents will relent, and a fico for George of Coldrach."

"Nay," said Bess, "that cannot be. You must never mention such a thing again. If I cannot obey my father, I shall never disgrace him;" and here the voice of her mother calling her from the kitchen regions broke up our confidences for the time.

It was soon after this that a sad blow fell upon Braemar, and brought sorrow to the

doors of nearly every one, high and low, in the Strath. One night, while we were sitting down to supper, a tall form stalked into the hall and took up his stand in the darkness at the far end. We were all startled; but before I had got to my feet, old Angus Shaw had caught a knife from the table and a candle from the wall, and advanced to the intruder. As he held up the light in the stranger's face, I at once recognised the seer whose second-sight had been exerted on Lord Mar's behalf on the day when King James's standard had been set up. His face was deadly pale, and his hollow eyes gazed vacantly upon us.

"The Ephiteach!" cried lady Balmoral, Bess, and Angus Shaw together; and then they held their breaths in awe-struck silence, and waited for him to speak.

"Your news, Donal Dubh?" cried Angus at last, out of patience. "Speak, man—is it well or ill?"

"Ill," was the response in a hollow voice.

"The laird?—Balmoral?" cried the wife,

and "My father?" exclaimed Bess; "is it of him, Ephiteach, that you have come to tell us?"

"Balmoral is well, lady," was the Ephiteach's reply; "have no fears for him. He will return unscathed. Ay, to be hunted like the roe that he has so often chased in the Ballochbuie."

"Your news, then, Donal, your news?" said Angus Shaw. "Do you not see that you are frightening the ladies, man."

"I saw it, I knew it," said the Ephiteach, raising himself to his full height, and staring steadfastly at the ceiling. "It was thus. I lay on the hillside above Dunblane the night before the battle. On one side of me was Duncan Stewart, on the other Muckle Cattenach, called the Curst. The darkness closed around, and when the evening star shone above Ben Ledi, the hill of God, the power of the *Taisch* fell heavily upon me, and drew me apart from my comrades. I then saw an English town, and they who held it were Sasse-

nachs, but true men to the cause, and with them were our own Highlanders, the men of the Braes of Mar, the brave deer-stalkers of Glen Lui, Glen Dee, and Glen Derry. And close around them, hemming them in on every side, were the red-coated soldiers of the English, and men mounted on proud horses, which snorted and pawed the ground impatient for the slaughter. Oh! but it was a pitiable sight to see our brave lads thus entrapped beyond remeid, and help there was none to come. Closer and closer round them drew their foes, and firmer was the grasp that the Highlanders laid upon their claymores. I saw Morchall [Invercauld] holding the bridge with claymore in hand, but they ordered him to fall back within the town. I saw them fight in the streets for a whole day, behind the churchyard walls and behind the barriers, beating back the Sassenachs on every side. But next day came another army of the enemy, and the Sassenach commander basely yielded, and betrayed our Highlandmen. And I saw them driven away

bound and prisoners, like cattle to the shambles—and then I saw no more; and when I came to myself the grey morn was breaking over the Ochill Hills. I went and told the Earl of Mar what I had seen, and he threatened to hang me if I dared to speak of it, as if the power of the *Taisch* could be controlled. And then, when the news came of the surrender of Preston and the taking of King James's army, he told me to carry the news to Braemar, and never come back to the camp;" and having said so much, the Ephiteach turned on his heel and went out of the hall.

"Go after him, Angus Shaw," cried the lady; "stop him, and see that he gets meat and drink, and find out what all this means. You know his ways better than any one else. It fears me that his vision has boded ill that has e'en come ower soon to pass."

There was little supper for us, as we sat silent and anxious, waiting for Angus Shaw's return. If there was any truth in the Ephi-

teach's dark sayings, Derwentwater and Forster's army must have surrendered, and King James's cause was indeed lost. There were many of the Farquharsons, too, who had gone south to join Derwentwater under Borlum, and as these had doubtless also fallen into the hands of King George's troops, the disaster would be a crushing one for Braemar.

So it even fell out; for when Angus returned he was able to tell us that Forster had capitulated at Preston, after he had allowed his force to be surrounded in the town by the forces of Generals Willes and Carpenter. The chief of Invercauld and other gentlemen of the clan Farquharson, who had not fallen fighting at the barricades which they had erected in the town, had been sent off prisoners to London. Tom Forster, who though the best of bottle companions was no soldier, had irretrievably ruined King James's cause; and though Mar still kept the field, my instinct told me that we were approaching the end of this adven-

ture. Even the coming of King James himself might be too late to retrieve his fortunes.

The winter settled down upon us darkly, and overcast with clouds as cheerless as our hopes. Stormy winds whistled down the glens, or roared around the mountain-tops, lashing them with chilly showers of rain or sleet. The mountain streamlets, that had danced and sparkled so clearly in the summer sunshine, now rushed down to the Dee with brown floods and hoarse murmurings. There was little to tempt one out of doors, and as I very slowly recovered my strength, my days were spent in the old hall of Balmoral, sitting mostly in an embrasure of the window, through which a watery sunshine would sometimes struggle in the afternoon; and our evenings were spent round a great fire of peat and pine-roots, which threw so strong a light through the hall that candles could be dispensed with. It was a gloomy season, and each of us three had our own

individual cares to brood over. In the probable ruin of the rising, lady Balmoral could foresee the dangers that would threaten her husband from King George's Government: if not loss of life, at least confiscation of property; persecution, poverty, ruin, and perhaps exile. Whether I was right or wrong, I fancied that these forebodings were working a softening influence on her with regard to myself and Bess, for she left us more to ourselves, and seemed to have regained the cordial feelings that she had shown me before I had attempted to plead for Bess's hand. Bess was naturally concerned about her father also, and she was doubtless a good deal worried by my unceasing pressure that she should fly from the hated union with George of Coldrach, and become my wife without waiting for the consent of her parents. And to me the future was dark enough. Not only was I perplexed by the terror of losing Bess; but even if I succeeded in persuading her to run away with me, the

chances were that I might only return to England to find myself thrown into Newgate on a charge of treason and rebellion. With me, as with every one else in Braemar, the fateful year 1715 closed with shadows of anxiety and forebodings of coming evils.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The New Year passed in sadness and gloom. There were no young men in the glen to show their skill at the annual shinty matches or at the football struggle between the men of Mar and Gairn. There were no keen-eyed deer-hunters to shoot at the target, and no partners for the lasses to dance with at the Yule feasts. The New Year was, I was told, usually a season of special mirth and blitheness in Braemar; and as it came round again, the dejected spirits of those who remained were still farther cast down by the absence of the diversions to which they had been accustomed. On the day of old Yule I received an express from Meston, telling me that King James had landed at Peterhead, and had passed Dunottar on his

way to join Mar—"Not before time, for our army is melting like a snowball in summer," wrote the Professor. "I had the honour to kiss his Majesty's hand," continued Meston, "and was graciously received by him. He did me the honour to accept my birthday ode, and said my poetical merits would not fail to be rewarded when the proper time came. God grant it may, more for his Majesty's sake than for mine own; but loyal verse is liker to meet with a St Johnstoun's tippet than with a crown of bays at this writing. The K. is of a most dignified presence, but melancholique, and reserved, and has little of the ease of his royal uncle of facetious memory. God send him safe through with it, for he has a kittle cast before him. Pray you haste your convalescence, for I opine that the malady which detains you at Balmoral is more of the heart than of the body; and take Dunottar on your way to the army, so that we may have an Attic symposium together, to cheer our wits in these saddening times."

There was truth in Meston's allegation, for my wound was now completely healed up, and I had recovered much of my strength, so that any ostensible excuse for lingering longer at Braemar was rapidly slipping from me. I was all the more urgent in my entreaties to Bess to fly with me; but up to this time the maiden had turned a deaf ear to my pleading. She would not wed George of Coldrach or any one else—of that I might be sure; and if I went to the army, I would see her father and endeavour to prevail with him for his consent, and then come back to the glen for her. If she were to run away with me, she would become the talk of the country and be made a world's wonder. I ventured to remind her that her ancestress, the mother of Findlay Mor, the founder of her house and clan, had made a runaway marriage, for in the long winter evenings the lady Balmoral had delighted in narrating to me the tradition and history of the Farquharsons. Bess was obliged to confess the precedent; but then, as she urged,

that had happened long ago, and the lady had not run away with an Englishman, as if that made any relevant difference. But I did not give up the point, and lingered on at Balmoral, hoping that something might turn up which would allow of my taking Bess with me when I went.

We walked out together one afternoon, and climbed the slope of Craig-gowan to see the sun set behind the crest of Lochnagar. The parting rays flushed grandly upon the snow patches on the top of the great hill, and as the sun went down the mountain seemed to rise up to a greater height, and stretch out more majestic outlines on its massive shoulders. We watched the darkness rise up from the great corrie, and shroud the frowning rocky front of the hill until the mist-clouds came down halfway to meet it, and the deep horse-shoe on its front, now picked out in recently fallen snow, faded from sight. One by one the hills around us disappeared in the gloom, until a wan moon came out over the highest Conachcraig,

which did little more than reveal the darkness and solitude of the waste before us. We stood together under an old pine, my arm round Bess's waist, and I was pleadingly urging the necessity of my immediate departure, and the impossibility of my going away without her, and meeting with the usual reasons why it could not be.

We were so engrossed in our talk that we did not hear the rustling of the low stunted firs behind us, and footsteps among the stones, and before we knew of it, a gigantic Highlander, whose arms shone in the darkness, stood before us, endeavouring to peer into our faces.

"Who have we got here?" he cried, while I sprang back a pace, and, drawing my sword, pushed Bess behind me. "What! Mistress Bess, and Mr Bardolph too, I warrant. Nay, nay, no need of drawing. Put up your iron, sir; I'm not a man to carry clashes. We have met in the mirk before this time. Remember the bothy of Glenmuick."

"Cattenach!" cried Bess, reaching out her

hand to him—"Cattenach of the Ballochbuie! How came you here? and what news is there of the army? What of my father?"

"The laird is well in body," said Cattenach, shaking hands with me in my turn, while I sheathed my sword; "but, like every man of spirit, sair distressed at the turn things have taken. Our bonnie ploy is fairly spoiled. Deil mean them that mishandled it."

"But, Cattenach, the king has arrived," said Bess; "surely that will raise the spirits of the army. They will never give in if he is in their midst."

"He comes too late," said Cattenach, with a sigh. "The army is dwindled down to a wheen volunteers that have no place to go back to, and nothing to lose except their lives, which they stand a fair chance of parting with whether they bide or gang. The Whigs have ta'en Inverness, and shut up Seaforth in the north, and drawn Huntly back to protect his own country. The Camerons have gone home in pure dis-

gust. There is only the Marischal and two or three other lords that still hang on, determined to see the end of it. But, mark my word, the last blow has been struck for King James—this bout at any rate."

"And how have you come here?" asked Bess; "have you, too, deserted the Earl?"

"Deil a desert!" returned Cattenach, irately; "it was the Earl deserted me, for troth his intention to string me up in a tow was nothing less. Ye see it was this way, Mistress Bess: I and some of my Morven lads were sent out to levy contributions in a place called Auchtermuchty, under your jo, George of Coldrach. Weel, as I was ransacking a rich Whig's house, I fell upon a spence full of silver dishes that might have dined a duke; and as my ain ha' house of Bellastraid in Cromar is puirly enough provided wi' sic utensils, I even put them in my haversack, witting nothing that the Whig had given Coldrach a purse of gold as protection money. Then the dirdum was raised,

and Coldrach raged and drew upon me; but he made little by that, and oot o' pure spite delated me to the General. Bobbing John has little cause to be particular about spulzie, I trow; but he happened to be on the high horse, and there had been ill blood between us of auld, so he straightway ordered me the quarter-guard and the provost-marshal, with a thoughtful injunction that the rope should be strong enough to bear my weight. He supposed he would rid himsel' o' me aince and for aye. But when I heard his decree, I just knoited the heads of the guard together, and took my gait across the hills. God! but there were two o' Pitsligo's horse chased me to this side o' Kirriemuir, where I shot the foremost, and borrowed a cast of his horse across Glen Doll. If ye ca' that desertion, so be it."

"But what will you do when the Earl returns?"

"Braemar has seen the last of him, Mistress Bess, or I'm sair mista'en," replied Cattenach, shaking his head. "It will be

much if the Strath afford a safe beild to folk o' lesser note."

Bess then invited Cattenach to come to Balmoral for his supper and bed — an invitation which he readily accepted, saying he was going to his shielings in the Ballochbuie, but expected little provision there. So we went down the hill, Cattenach giving us a dismal picture of the prospects of the army, and relieving his mind by vilipending George of Coldrach, whom he looked upon as the cause of his having to leave the camp, and against whom he had sworn mortal revenge.

"So ye need never think that I'll betray ye," said Cattenach, in a jesting manner to Bess. "George of Coldrach shall never hear from me of your evening rambles on Craig-gowan. And, by my soul! Mistress Bess, if you follow my rede, you will close your hand on what you have got. Better a true Englishman than a false Scot; and though I would be loath to do harm to a hair of your head,

it fears me sair that I may have to make a wanton widow of ye, gin George Farquharson and I forgather in ony canny howe or corrie."

"Hush, Cattenach! you must not say such things," said Bess, authoritatively. "You must not say anything to my mother against young Coldrach, and do not tell her news to discourage her about the cause, or alarm her about my father."

In this quarrel that had happily ensued between Cattenach and George of Coldrach, it seemed to me that I discerned some prospect of meeting with a useful ally. Though nothing would have given me more pleasure than to meet my rival and fight out our quarrel to the death, I had no intentions of abetting the overt revenge on Coldrach's life that the other appeared to have resolved on taking. But if I could get him to help me in my plans with Bess, to stand by me in the case of necessity, or, if need were, to aid me in keeping Coldrach out of the way, he might prove very useful. In my madness at this

time I even sometimes thought of carrying Bess off by force across the mountains, and getting the first clergyman we came upon in the Mearns to marry us. I was sure I should be able to obtain pardon and forgiveness when all was over. But assistance would be required in the project. I kept this plan, however, for the last extremity; and in the meantime I resolved to take Cattenach into my confidence. The frank, bold, and independent bearing of the young man—for, with all his stature and strength, he could not be much over two or three and twenty — had attracted me towards him the first time I saw him, and we had been on terms of free comradeship whenever we had met each other since.

Next morning, when he started for the Ballochbuie, where he had a holding, which was, however, more an excuse for deer-stalking than for husbandry, I walked across the moors with him, and drew him into conversation about himself. He frankly told me that, now

he had been forced to leave the army, he intended to harass King James's enemies on his own private account; and as soon as the men whom he had recruited for Lord Mar joined him—and they would soon follow him when they learnt the treatment he had received — he intended to levy contributions upon the Whigs on the estates of the Forbeses and other landlords who had adhered to King George, or would not turn out for James. "And so you see, I shall just serve the king, Mr Bardolph, in my own way."

"I think I can trust you, Cattenach," I said. "I know that if you will not help me, you at least will keep my counsel."

"I would betray no man," was the prompt reply; "and I shall be proud if I can serve you in any reasonable way."

"You are no friend to George of Coldrach. Nay, patience. I have no liking for him myself, and I am particularly anxious that this marriage should not take place between him and Mistress Farquharson."

Cattenach whistled a few bars of a piobrach. "Do you want to marry her yourself?" he asked. "I have heard that sometimes you London gentry are not much to be trusted when a bonnie lass comes in your way. Is it a wife or a miss ye mint at making Mistress Bess?"

"My wife, of course!" I returned, indignantly; "you do not think that I or any one else could be base enough to wrong such a sweet creature."

"And what says the lass herself?"

"She is downright miserable at the prospect of marrying Coldrach; and if she could only get her parents' consent, I believe she would readily agree to be my wife at once."

"Ay, but there's the difficulty," retorted Cattenach. "Ye see, our big families hereabouts are fain to intermarry among kith and kin, to keep the gear together, as good right there is, when so little of it is agoing. And as Balmoral has no son, it is doubtless to be desired that the land should be kept in the

name; and you may be sure Coldrach will have Inverey and all the others on his side—the unchancy wastrel. But to come to the point, Mr Bardolph. I cannot see how I can stead you in this matter at present, though I would cheerfully do my best to oblige the lass, and make Coldrach sup sour sowens. What do you propose to do?"

"That is the point on which I ask your advice."

"Well, I would at once kill George of Coldrach, if I were you — though, mind you, that is a treat I wish to keep for myself."

"Do you think it would be a recommendation to the favour of Balmoral and his wife to slay their kinsman and prospective son-in-law?"

"Maybe no; and as I don't want the lass, you had better leave him to me. Why don't you run away with her?"

"She will not run away with me."

"Carry her off, then."

"But even if I made up my mind to that I should want help."

"Count upon me. In a few days I shall have half-a-dozen tight lads about me, who will convoy you and her to Aberdeen or anywhere beyont the Cairn, though all the Farquharsons from Tullich to the Linn were to turn out and bar the way."

I thanked Cattenach warmly for his promised aid, and assured him that I would amply reward any assistance he or his friends would give me. I told him too that I was anxious to gain my end quietly if possible, and that I was still in hopes that something might come round that would impel Bess to flee with me of her own free-will, even if her father's consent was still withheld. My great difficulty was that I could linger no longer in Braemar; and then when I was away her mother would doubtless ply Bess with arguments in favour of young Coldrach, and extort a consent from the maiden to accede to the marriage. In leaving Balmoral I felt that I was leaving

behind me my best chance of being able to save Bess from her cousin.

Cattenach slowly whistled some bars of a piobrach, while he stirred a clump of heather meditatively with the point of his claymore. "Go away at once," he said; "it will be your best plan. Let the lady Balmoral think that you have given up the game in despair. Even if you let Mistress Bess fear that you had lost heart and given her up, it would be no mistake. They are queer cattle, women are. They think little of a lover as long as they have their thumb on him; but let him once take wing, and they will whistle out the last breath in their body, as they would to call back an unreclaimed hawk. Let Mistress Bess get at her own mind after you are gone, and when she sees that she has no choice but Coldrach, you will find her all the more persuadable."

I could not help being amused at the assured way in which this young Highlander, who had seen almost nothing of the world beyond the confines of his native hills, laid down

the law to me, a good few years his senior, a professed philosopher, and a man of society, who fancied myself not inexpert in the nature of the sex; but there was shrewd truth in his counsel, which had the additional recommendation that it was the only course practically open to me. But still I hesitated, reluctant to admit the possibility of leaving Bess behind me.

If I were only sure, I said; if I had any one to depend upon to let me know what was going on here, and to warn me before Bess could be irrevocably forced into a match, I would go away to Dunottar, or even to the camp at Perth, and wait the progress of events. But unless I had means of knowing how Bess was situated, beyond what she might choose to tell me herself, I could not make up my mind to quit the glen.

"Leave it to me," said Cattenach. "I shall look after the lass, and see that nought befalls her. By God! rather than George of Coldrach should marry her, I shall carry her off myself,

and hide her in a retreat in Morven, where ne'er a Farquharson of them all should find her until you come to claim the lass yourself."

"No, no!" I cried hastily; "certainly not that. If Mistress Farquharson is taken from Balmoral, it must be by myself and by none other. But if you would indeed watch over her for me, Cattenach; if you would keep me informed of what goes on at Balmoral, and warn me when any danger threatens her——"

"There is my thumb on it," interrupted Cattenach. "I'll look to your plea, and give you due notice when to come forward. Thank heaven, I can write a screed clear enough, though the art has done me more ill than good, for the chief use I've put it to has been in setting my hands to wadsets on my bits of land. However, Mr Bardolph, trust me to let you know how the land lies."

It was with sincere gratitude that I took leave of the generous Highlandman, who promised to take every opportunity of communicating with me, and to send me a special

messenger in case of need. My mind was made up; I would start at once for Dunottar, and there wait for the issue of events with respect to both love and war. As Lord Mar had always kept me apart from the army, I felt no disposition to join it now unless there was a chance of another engagement with Argyll, which seemed very unlikely; and if the forces were to fall back within the mountains and act upon the defensive, I should only be an encumbrance. I should therefore go to my friend the Professor at Dunottar, where I should have better opportunity of communicating with my relatives, and whence, if need were, I should be readily able to escape to the Continent in case of a dispersion of the Jacobite cause.

I lost no time in communicating to my hostess my intention to start across the hills next day for Dunottar, and had to excuse myself against much ceremonious pressure to prolong my stay, and reasons why I should postpone my journey. The lady Balmoral was

sure that my wound was not yet sufficiently healed to stand the long journey and rough roads to Dunottar; and what was to become of me if I was again laid up, and she not there to physic me? She had a great respect for Professor Meston. He was a man of learning and good principles; but learning did not always make a man wise, and when the Professor began with his bleedings and Latin drugs, she had no trust in him. She earnestly adjured me, as I valued my health, to have nothing to do with Meston's medicaments; and she promised to make up a bottle of sage leaves, decocted according to a special receipt of her great-grandmother's, who had used it with remarkable effect in the troubles when the Clan Chattan broke out, with which I was to wash and poultice my wound in case it again gave me pain. She bewailed her misfortune in losing me, as my presence in the house had been a protection to them against the visits of the dreaded cateran, and it had given them courage to have a man body about the house

at a time when the country was unsettled. And she spoke very kindly of her liking for myself. I had been the preserver of Bess, and they would never forget me, and surely some time I would come back to see them at Balmoral.

"Alas! lady Balmoral, what have I to come back for? It would be cruelty surely to ask me back to witness a happiness that you have denied to myself."

"Tuts, Mr Bardolph! the wind will have blown these idle fancies out of your head before you are half-roads across the hills. Ye'll live to laugh at your liking for a country-bred lassie like Bess; and when you meet with a suitable match among your own folk—as why should ye no'? for weel I wot ye're a proper man, clean and deliver—ye may safely swear to her that your heart came back from Scotland as whole as it went there."

"Yes, I may swear that; for I loved Bess before I came to Scotland—loved her the first time I saw her."

"Your tongue is too ready for mine," said the dame, laughing; "and it is perhaps as well ye're going, for ye might end in fletching me into letting you have your own way. But it is best as it is for both parties—yes, for both parties;" and to prevent my further importunity, she bustled out of the room.

I had to bid adieu to Bess, and it was not without difficulty that I secured an interview. From the time that I had announced my departure on the early morrow, she had avoided me; and though I had sought for her over the house, she was always with her mother or some of the maids. But as the gloaming fell I caught her outside the castle, and, putting my arm round her waist, led her through the birches by the footpath down to the Dee. We walked on in silence until the dark river, which raised a moaning voice in the gathering gloom, arrested our footsteps.

"To-morrow, then, I go, Bess," I said, turning her round to me; and with my arms about

her we stood looking into each other's faces in the dusky gloaming.

She tried to say something, but the words were choked in her throat, and the only reply she could make me was a convulsive sob.

"And this is to be the end of it?" I said, bitterly. "I have followed you to this remote part of the country, for if it had not been for you no considerations would have induced me to come to Scotland. And now I go away worse than I came—for I came here with the hope of your love, and must go away without even that."

"No, no—not without it," she murmured.

"And what is this love that I am to carry away with me?—an idea, a dream, a mere fancy of the brain! No, Bess; if I cannot have yourself, you may keep your love for him to whom you give yourself."

"Oh, you are cruel!" she murmured, turning away her face from the stern gaze I had fixed upon it.

"No, Bess, I am not cruel; but you must

look at the truth both as regards me and yourself. You have said you love me, and yet you will allow me to go away, it may be—most likely it will be—never to meet again. You will remain here, and will yield to your parents' wishes to marry your cousin; you will marry him, for you will not be able to help yourself."

"I shall never marry him. I shall never marry any one if you go away."

"How can I stay? Have I not remained here long after my wound was well, only in the hope that some good hap of fortune would give you to me? What have I to stay for? Do you wish me to wait for your wedding, to be George of Coldrach's groomsman?"

"No, no, not that," she murmured. "Oh! kill me if I have done you wrong, but do not reproach me in this way!"

"You have refused to trust me, to fly with me," I went on, determinedly. "If your love had been as strong as mine, you would have dared this and more for my sake."

"Oh, do not press me thus!" she cried, burying her head on my breast. "I am but a poor weak girl, and yet I wish to do what is right. You would never respect me as your wife if I ran away with you."

"Not respect you! What folly! Why, we could be married at the first village we come to where there is a clergyman. Cattenach will accompany us, and soon provide a priest."

"It cannot be—it cannot be! I know your heart; it is too good to torture me thus. I will plead with my father. I will tell him that my love is altogether yours; that I will marry no other man, and that George of Coldrach may have Balmoral if he likes without me. And you will not leave me in anger; you will not quit Scotland without seeing me once more? Promise me that much,"—and she twined her arms round my neck and looked up with tear-gemmed eyes beseechingly in my face.

My assumption of fierceness—for it was more assumed than real—could not withstand such

pleading, and I kissed her and strained her to my heart. I vowed I not only would not leave Scotland without seeing her again, but that I would never leave Scotland at all unless in her company. I urged her to be of good cheer and to keep her heart constant, and to let me know all her mind and circumstances.

"See," she said, touching a ruby ring on her finger which I had given to her,—"do you think I would part with that unless I were sore bestead—at my last extremity? It shall never leave my finger except to redeem my troth to you. When you receive this, you will know that I can hold out no longer—that you may come and take me away."

"And I shall come, Bess, whenever you send for me. Night or day, when I get your summons, I shall start for Balmoral."

There was little more said between us, and we stood for a space looking down into the dark river, whose murmur got deeper the closer the darkness fell around us. The stars came out, the frosty air grew keener, and the surface

of the Dee began to reflect the play of quivering and dancing lights, almost before we were conscious of the change. Looking around and above us, we saw that the sky had suddenly become filled with these strange aerial reflections which had been noticed for the first time for nearly a hundred years the winter before, and which many at the time declared were indications of the judgment of Heaven upon our political distractions—though the learned Dr Halley hath since given a more rational explanation of them as originating in a peculiar condition of the sky and the movements of meteors. But the north-country folk still speak of them as "Lord Derwentwater's lights," and firmly believe that they were sent to foreshadow that nobleman's rising and its unfortunate end.

"See!" cried Bess, "see the merry dancers! Oh! there must be something going to happen," and she clung closely to me in affright. "These are never seen but before something. They came, they say, before the great troubles of Montrose and the Covenant broke out.

Oh, my poor father! What will become of us?"

I did my best to soothe and reassure her, and pointed out how absurd it was to seek to connect any disturbance in the vast sky with things that were transpiring on this little earth of ours. But she was not to be composed, and clung to me all the more, shivering and trembling, with a fear-struck face, looking up to the northern sky as it quivered and flickered above us. And it certainly was a weird and impressive sight, as the ever-changing rays of light danced about the black hill-tops, now and then throwing a brighter beam into the dark hollows of the glen, and casting lightning-like flashes across the surface of the Dee. On the rounded shoulders of the hill over Crathie, and on the top of Craig Mhor, the lights danced and flitted with dazzling rapidity, casting green and yellow shades upon the wreaths of frosty haze that were hovering around them.

"Let us go back," said Bess. "It is a forego of something."

"It is a forego of our happy union, my love; and the heavens are dancing for joy at the prospect."

But Bess's superstitious fancies were too much excited to be driven away by this sally, and we went back to the castle, stealing in by the postern-door. In the courtyard was the lady Balmoral, with all the inmates of the castle, and some of the people from the cottages round about, eagerly looking up at the sky, discussing the portent, and recalling the disasters that had followed similar appearances. Some suggested one cause, some another; but all were unanimous that these lights boded no good to the Braes of Mar.

I did not see Bess when I took horse next morning, and with David Webster for my attendant, set out to ride across the Grampians to Dunottar. It was the lady Balmoral herself who brought me the stirrup-cup, with

apologies for her daughter's absence; but as I looked back in the saddle while riding up the slope towards Abergeldie, a white handkerchief waved an adieu to me from a well-remembered window.

BOOK IV.

THE FLIGHT ACROSS THE POLACH

CHAPTER XXXV.

The view of a broad expanse of ocean, with the winter morning sun already above the waters; a heavy swell of sea lazily heaving in from the eastward, and breaking in hoarse billows upon the crag-bound coast; the brown sails of fishing-boats rising and falling upon the bosom of the deep, with a few vessels of larger size gliding along upon a northerly tack,—this was a scene very different from that which had greeted me in the morning for months past, a view shut in by the lofty dark mountains of Braemar. As I looked out from my window, high up in one of the towers of Dunottar, which seemed almost to overhang the sea, and took in my changed surroundings, I seemed like one who has come

back from a sojourn in fairyland to the every-day commonplace world of our life. Away to the north, low down at the head of a little bay, was an old town, whose grey stone houses looked cold and bleak even in the winter sun, but with fishing-boats and small craft to mark some claims to industry and commerce. Both north and south the coast was walled in by precipices of black rock, on one of the loftiest and most inaccessible of which this castle of Dunottar, where I now found myself, had been built.

After a long and wearisome ride across the hills, I had reached Dunottar late the night before, and finding that my good friend the governor had retired to rest, had ordered him not to be disturbed, and desired to be shown to a chamber. As I had been expected for some days, I was shown at once to a room which had been got in readiness for me, and after a hearty supper, had hurried to bed to sleep off my fatigues. It was late in the morning when I awoke; and I had just

finished contemplating the view from the window, and was about to summon David Webster to assist me to dress, when the door was thrown open and my host himself appeared, with a boisterous and cordial welcome.

With his assumption of military rank, Meston had discarded the last semblance of his scholarly character, and now swaggered with all the airs of a veteran martialist of many years' standing. He wore a blue coat of an antique cut, thickly laced with bars of tarnished gold; his legs and feet were cased in enormous jack-boots, with metal balls attached to the rowels, which made a jingling rattle as he walked; a long bowl-hilted spada clattered behind him; and a hat of the cock which used to be known by the last generation as a Monmouth beaver, was fiercely poised on one side of his head. But that the kindly and hospitable spirit was still there was shown by the flask of brandy which he bore in his left hand, while he proceeded to give me a cordial greeting with his right.

"Welcome! right, right welcome, to the poor cheer and dowie fortunes of Dunottar!" he cried. "As I am the worst governor the old place has had, I am likely to be its last, for I fear me sore we are fast getting to the end of our tether. But I am right glad to see you again *in potestate*—for troth, when I left you behind me in Braemar, it sore feared me that you would never leave it till the Day of Judgment. These rascal cateran's swords cut deep."

I confessed that I had been nearly at death's door, and added, with some malice, that nothing but the careful tendance and kindness of my hostess had brought me round to life again, and made me fit for the road.

"Ay, ay," returned Meston, testily, "that no doubt. And the lass, too, I daresay, would be forward enough to have her hand in the cure. Well, well, the man who can recover from the claymores of the Macgregors of the Smoke, and the still more deadly medicaments of the lady Balmoral, must be reserved for higher destiny."

"That destiny which awaits those whom water will not drown—eh, my good friend? From all I can hear, that seems to be an end that we have all in immediate prospect."

"There is some truth in that," muttered the Professor, as his face fell, and he hastened to pour out a glass of brandy from the bottle which he carried. "Our affairs are even in jeopardous condition. But who can tell what is upon the cards. Robert Bruce was seven times worse bestead than King James is to-day, and yet he lived to brook the Crown of Scotland, and to be ancestor of a long line of kings."

And then the Professor poured out to me his hopes and fears about the situation. His hopes were soon summed up, and seemed slender enough when stated. They consisted in Ormond's being able, even at the eleventh hour, to get together a force of Frenchmen and Spaniards, and by a descent upon the English coast, retrieve the disasters of Derwentwater in the north. Or, if the Duke of

Mar, as he was now styled, could be removed from the command of King James's army, and a bolder and more capable leader appointed, all might yet go well. Cadogan's troops, which had come to the assistance of Argyll, were unused to the rigours and hardships which attend a winter campaign in Scotland, and would scarcely be in a condition to effectively encounter the Highland army; and at the first news of an advance, many of the clans who had already gone home would return to the standard. The chiefs were murmuring that Mar had taken possession of the king, who was solely swayed by his counsels; and some of them were vowing, rather than allow the cause to be lost by further inaction, to seize his Majesty's person, and to cut their way through Argyll's army with him to the Scottish capital. As for King James, Meston thought that his Majesty already realised that he had been deceived, and that since the rising in England had come to so unfortunate an end, he was unwilling to hazard

his cause upon an uncertain issue, especially as the Duke of Orleans was at his old game of making magnificent promises of assistance on a future opportunity. "So my good lord, the Earl Marischal, informs me," concluded Meston; "but a council of war is to be held in a few days, and we shall see what comes of it. Nothing good, at all events, if Bobbing John has his own way; but there will be many in the council who will not lack the courage to tell his Majesty their mind about his Lieutenant-General. One thing is certain, if a blow be not speedily struck, we may look for Argyll stepping in to breakfast here at Dunottar before many weeks are over."

I then asked Meston's advice as to whether I ought to go on to headquarters at Perth, as my wound was now sufficiently cured to enable me to take an active part in anything that might be agoing.

"By no means," said the Professor; "wait here and see how the bowls roll. If there is to be an advance, 'tis not a long ride to Perth;

if it is to be a retreat, even wait here for it. And moreover, by some miraculous chance, your name hath not been included in the lists of the proscribed, where, alas! mine is duly set down in black and white. Have patience. It would be folly to face the pains and penalties of treason if the game is indeed over, as well it seems to be. So tarry here at Dunottar, and you may be sure I shall be right glad to have your company; and I would, if I thought that were any inducement, read to you a new canto of my 'Knight of the Kirk,' which I have eased the distractions of my mind in these uncertain times by committing to paper."

Governor Meston then handed me a packet of letters which had been sent on to wait my arrival by Mr Lindsay, my uncle Thirlwall's Aberdeen correspondent. To my amazement, my uncle still complained that he had received no letters from me, and begged that if I had written, I might choose some other means of forwarding them, as he began to fear that my intelligence must have been intercepted, since

he himself had fallen under suspicion of the Government, and had been put to much trouble by interrogatories from the Secretary's office, and by being put under espial. "But it will take cleverer men than King George's officials to trap so old a politician as myself," my uncle wrote triumphantly; "though I am thoroughly at fault how you have escaped their meshes. Neither hath your name appeared in any of their lists, nor is there any intention hitherto of proceeding against you, as a private friend in the Secretary's office well assureth me. This is passing strange; but since it is so, I advise you to come back at once and lie quietly at Culmford until this business blow over, for all is lost in the meantime. Of that I am well satisfied; but our chance will come yet, and come soon, if France will but keep her promises, and get the Turk to declare war upon the Emperor, which will compel the Elector to send his troops out of this country. Wherefore, since you can now do no good to King James in Scotland, you had better come home as quietly

as you may, and be thankful that you were not in Derwentwater's business, and have escaped Newgate, where so many gentlemen lie at present in pitiable case, with the sad prospect of Tyburn to free them from it."

A letter from my father also pressed my return. The child at the Manor House was dwindling away, he said, and evidently was not long for this world, and Sir Robert was fretting himself over my absence, and coming daily to the Rectory to inquire if there were any news of my coming back. The hand of Providence was clearly traceable in these circumstances; but God forbid that he, my father, should exult over them, but rather accept in all humility and charity whatever might be in store for us. The insolence of the Whigs had reached an overweening pitch since the disaster at Preston, and the language used in their pulpits was a disgrace to the Christian religion—so much so that he had been compelled to alter his sermon on King Charles the Martyr, so as to convey a public rebuke to their blasphemous

and unorthodox utterances; whereof he was having a new edition imprinted, which I would be able to peruse on my return. My mother, who was wearying to see me, was much at the Manor doctoring the little child, whose parents looked to her for everything, and my aunt there—changed times, indeed, for Joan Moonlight to become my aunt—received her visits in a very grateful and chastened spirit. And all joined in entreating me to come back with speed.

I went down to breakfast not badly pleased with my Culmford news, and found the governor at breakfast with a rosy-faced merry-eyed Presbyterian divine, whom he introduced to me as the minister of Whistleberry, who, he added with great dignity and significance, had done him the honour to sojourn with him for a time in Dunottar Castle. I soon found out that Mr M'Gill's sojourn was not altogether voluntary, though, to do him justice, he showed no disposition to abridge his parole. Meston, it appeared, in the exercise of his unquestion-

able authority, had ordered that all the Presbyterian clergymen should pray for King James; and Mr M'Gill, who was a stout Whig, had not only persisted in praying for King George, but had denounced the rising in the strongest Biblical terms, maligning King James as an idolatrous Ahab, and the Highlanders as wicked and ungodly Amorites. This was not to be borne, and the governor had dragged him off to Dunottar, with threats of imprisonment in the Whigs' vault, and an ultimate exaltation upon the gallows if he persisted in his recusancy. But Meston's kindly nature prevailed over his official duty when he found in the Whig parson a convivialist and a wit of a capacity not inferior to his own—in fact, the very boon companion that he wanted to relieve the dulness of Dunottar; and instead of the Whigs' vault, Mr M'Gill found himself accommodated at the governor's table on a parole which, as soon as he had tasted the Rhenish wine that Meston had captured from the Dutch *schouyt*, there

was no probability of his violating; and the good and abundant cheer of Dunottar, which was furnished at the expense of King James's enemies, must have proved an agreeable change from the sober fare of his poor manse.

"I am not one to ride on the head of my commission," said Meston to me aside, in extenuation of his clemency; "and I would be loath to proceed to extremities with any poor man, although it is doubtless my bounden duty to have him straitly warded in the Whigs' vault, which hath already accommodated many of his kidney. But as touching this minister, he hath perceptions of better things—signs of grace, I may say. I never saw a man take off his glass with a better relish, and I am not without hopes that I shall bring him round from the errors of Presbytery, and make him a loyal subject of King James. I may say without conceit that I have given him new light upon the Second Epistle to Timothy and apostolic order—the discussion extended over six bottles of Rhine

wine and a mutchkin of Nantz—and with sound arguments and good liquor I do not despair of seeing him recant his heresies in a surplice yet."

The Professor and his catechumen furnished the chief amusement of my visit to Dunottar. In the morning the governor, as became his place, treated his prisoner with grave and courteous dignity, pressing hospitality in the most courtly fashion, and carefully avoiding any religious or political topics that might hurt the captive's feelings. At dinner, of which we partook at noon, the frigor was sensibly relaxed. Meston made sly hits at Presbyterianism, quoted verses from his manuscript poem 'The Knight of the Kirk,' sneered at Presbyterian ordination, and denounced Puritanism generally. The minister was nothing loath to take up the challenge, and at it they went hammer and tongs, traversing all the well-worn discussion between the two creeds, nor omitting at the same time to do ample justice to the fluids before them. But

it was when we met at supper that the battle-royal of the day came off. By this time the philosopher was in an earnest if not a combative mood; all distinctions between jailer and prisoner had disappeared; Meston was only anxious to vanquish his opponent in the field of fair discussion. But, alas for the Professor! if he had the finer head, the divine had the stouter stomach. Mr M'Gill drank glass for glass with the governor without apparently the slightest detriment to speech or reason, the only symptoms of intoxication being that his face grew redder and still more red; and long after the Professor had succumbed to his potations, he would continue tranquilly at table until the bottle was finished, when he would kindly rouse his jailer and assist him to his couch. I have little interest in theological polemics, being well content to abide by the creed of the Church, and leaving, as is meet, the defence and explanation of it to the clergy; but I could not help being amused at the nightly

wrangle between the disputants, and the broil with which it invariably terminated. The divine was probably the more expert theologian of the two, and when the appeal came to authority, the Professor, whether from a weak cause, an imperfect knowledge of the subject, or the disordered condition of his intellectuals, generally went to the wall, and with him went his temper.

"I will hear no more such heresy," cried the governor, vehemently striking the table. Mr M'Gill had just confuted his arguments for the existence of threefold orders in the first age of the Church. "It's rank nonsense, and opposed both to reason and revelation. Nobody but a d——d Whig would deny the existence of bishops—yea, even in the very days of the apostles themselves."

"Troth, Professor, I'm thinking the apostles had more to do with Whiggery than ye gie them credit for. Freedom of conscience, liberty of speech, and justice and equity to all men were their teaching, I trow; and if

these be not the Whig foondamentals, then ca' me Tory."

"What!" cried Meston, in rising wrath, "would ye liken the blessed apostles to your ain cut-luggit, lang-tongued, psalm-singing, sanctimonious, hypocritical poopit-thumpers?" emphasising each adjective with a blow upon the table. "Ye'll tell me next that St Paul himself would have subscribed the Covenant."

"Undoobtedly he wad, honest man, gin he had been spared," replied the divine, placidly sipping his brandy-punch.

"By G—d! I'll tolerate no such blasphemy," roared Meston. "I've even been too tolerant with your errors, and this is the return I get; but I shall take better order with ye, my man. Holloa! John Reith, Fettes, Garvie; here to me! Plunge me this atheistical malefactor into the Whigs' vault, and see that he tastes nought but bread and water until he comes to due contrition. Seize him, in the name of King James and my Lord Marischal."

And the governor, rising to lay hands on

his prisoner, reeled across the room, but staggered and would have fallen had I not caught and supported him into a chair, where he lay supine with his head upon the table.

"Ay, ay," said the minister, who had sat unmoved, with a twinkle in his eye, during this ebullition; "the Professor is gone for the nicht. It is a great pity he is so fond o' the bottle—the brandy-stoup rests with you, Mr Bardolph. He is a learned man and a kindly man, and respectit by baith Whig and Tory, but he is ower partial to liquor. Sae we'll just send him cannily to bed and finish the drap drink quietly oorselves, just to keep thae loons o' servants frae deboshin' themselves wi' it when they get their maister's head doon."

And finish it he assuredly did; and though he had probably drunken three times as much as the poor Professor, he bade me good night and trotted away to his room without the slightest sign of ebriety either in gait or speech.

Such was a sample of my life at Dunottar for a week or ten days, during which I was ever anxiously expecting some intelligence from Braemar, and fretting because no messenger came from Cattenach. Sometimes I accompanied Governor Meston and his troop of ancient retainers, who had been left as garrison to the castle, on cess-levying expeditions and in making victualling requisitions; but the Professor was not made of stern enough stuff to be a successful forager. He lent a ready and sympathising ear to the farmers' excuses of poverty and distress; and even left a cow, which he had pointed for the cess, and was having driven before us to Dunottar, with a poor widow, who came out of her cottage to complain that her sons had been impressed by the Earl Marischal and carried off with the army, leaving her destitute. But for the exertions of the garrison, old troopers of the Earl Marischal, some of whom had served in the "Troubles," and had few bowels of compassion, the Castle of

Dunottar would have been scantily victualled, if it had depended upon its governor. And, what was worse in the eyes of his followers, he sternly repressed all private plundering, and punished when information came to his ears. To David Webster above all, who had spent the time of his detention in my service at Balmoral in bewailing the golden chances of "spulzie" in the Mearns which he was losing, the governor's lenity was a cruel disappointment, and he did not spare his reproaches.

"Oh, man!" he would cry, forgetting even the small appearance of respect which he usually extended to his master—"oh, man, can ye no shear yer corn when ye hae the sickle in? Gin ye hae na regaird for King James's interest, nor yer ain, ye suld think of ithers—of me, for instance, that has followed ye for five year for but little fee or bountith. There is the gudeman of Westertoun, wi' weel-stocked byres and a fu' cornyaird, as rank a Whig as ever subscribed the

Covenant, refusin' to pay his cess, and yet ye winna distrenzie his gudes and gear, because he comes whingein' tae ye wi' a tale about a deein' wife. Oot upon sic saft-heartedness! Gie me but twa troopers, and I'se sune make a clean oot o' the place."

"I believe ye, Dauvit," said Meston; "but be pleased to remember that this is a garrison, and that I'm its governor, and that there is a quarter-guard for the punishment of insolent and unruly language—ay, and an auld wooden mare in the great courtyard, on which ye shall prance the haill afternoon if I hear another word oot of your head," and David perforce had to skulk away grumbling.

On the morning of the 30th of January, two expresses arrived at Dunottar with tidings of very different import. One messenger was from the Earl Marischal, informing the governor that a council of war had the day before come to a resolution to retreat to the north, and sending instructions for collecting victualling for the force on its way past Dunottar.

There were serious apprehensions, the Earl added, that King James meant to return to France, in which case his followers would instantly disband themselves and look out for their own safety; but many of the chiefs and officers were determined to keep hold of his person, and retain him in the north until a more successful rising could be organised. If the king fled, the Marischal added, he foresaw that the cause of the Stuarts was irretrievably lost; and he sent Meston private instructions about his own affairs, which made the governor conclude that he foresaw the possibility of having to seek safety in exile.

With spirits much cast down by these tidings, we were on the point of setting out for church in Stonehaven, where an Episcopal curate had officiated since the commencement of the rising, and who was to preach a great sermon on King Charles's Martyrdom, for which Meston had supplied the most rousing passages, and had composed an elegiac ode, which hath since been published in his works.

This he was looking forward to hearing declaimed from the pulpit with complacency, and had insisted that I should accompany him to the service. My mind was so full of my own troubles that I would gladly have declined, had it not been for fear of vexing my host's good-natured vanity. Our friend M'Gill had offered, with a sly twinkle in his eye, to preach a martyrdom sermon for us in the castle—a proposal which was unceremoniously declined. We were then on the point of setting out for church, when, just as we were descending the steep pathway that led from the gate, built between two great rocks, we encountered a dust-stained and footsore Highlandman, with his plaid knotted closely round him, who came trotting up the slope.

"Is there a Sassenach gentleman callit Bardolph, or some siclike name?" he began, leaning on his long staff to take breath; and when he caught sight of me he broke out, "Ach, Cot, Mr Bardolph, but I am glad to see ye on your ain two legs; when last we for-

gaithart I thocht ye wad never rise aff yer back again."

It was Seumas Roy Oig, my companion of the memorable day when I was wounded by the cateran at the Fairies' Corrie, and hastily taking him aside, I anxiously inquired who had sent him, and what message he had brought. It was Cattenach of the Ballochbuie who had sought him out the afternoon before, and had promised that I would give him a golden guinea if he would find me and tell me to come at once to Braemar to a place where I should find Cattenach waiting for me. If I lost time I lost all, Seumas was bid to tell me, and he was to show me this as a token. And after much fumbling in a corner of his doublet, Seumas produced a small packet, wrapped up in dressed deer-skin and tied with a thong of leather, which having undone with some difficulty, I discovered to contain the ruby ring I had given to Bess. It was the signal that Bess was in extremity—that she consented to fly with me. My time had come at last.

"Meston! Professor! your ear for one moment," I shouted; for the governor had held on his way, and was already at the bottom of the castle rock. I hastened after him, and hurriedly told him the strait I was in.

"I must start instantly," I said; "this is a matter that brooks no delay. I must meet Cattenach by to-morrow morning, and see what his plans are. You must let me have a horse for Seumas, to guide me through the hills."

"Through the hills! That lass again! *Quæ te dementia cepit!* Your weird is to leave your bones in Braemar, sure as you are speaking to me. Have I not told you that these Farquharsons are like wasps?—touch one and they all sting you. If you attempt to carry her off, you make an enemy of every man of them from Tullich to Inverey. Be advised and come cannily to the kirk. I promise you a treat to-day, though I say it that perhaps should not. And since the army

is going to retreat, the king may be here any day. You surely would not miss waiting on his Majesty for all the women on the run of Dee?" added the vowed bachelor, ungallantly.

"My honour is pledged, Professor, and go I must; but you may judge that I am likely to make no long stay in Braemar. In two days at the most I shall be back here again, and, I hope, not alone."

"Well, if you will go, go you must," said the Professor, scratching his head in his perplexity, "and may the Lord defend you from the dirks of the Farquharsons! But I trust ye hae the lass's full consent. When Simon Fraser carried off the Lady Lovat it bred a gey splore in the country, and he is no' clear of the law yet."

"Doubt it not; I have her own summons to come for her."

"Well, well. Trust a woman for being at the bottom of mischief. A bonnie clamjamfray this *mulier peregrina*, this gangrel dame, will raise among her kith and kin, and may-

hap among your ain too, Mr Bardolph. But these Farquharsons are many, and can fight their own battles, while you are alone and a stranger, and, by my saul! I'll stand by you in this business."

"I expected nothing less from your kindness, Professor, and, believe me, I shall show my gratitude. And now, with your leave, I shall to horse at once."

"Ye'll take Dauvit Wobster with ye," said the Professor; "the loon may be useful to show you the way back, for I hardly think you will find any one in Braemar to volunteer for a guide, unless they are anxious to end their days on the gallows-knowe of Balmoral."

I said I would gladly take David, but that I depended on Cattenach to assist me in my plans.

"Ah! Cattenach of the Ballochbuie. Cattenach the Curst, as they call him. To be sure, if there is a lawless ploy in the haill countryside, Cattenach will be in it. But he is a daring rascal, and will do good service to any one he

takes a liking to. But Balmoral will hang him, as sure as my name's Willie Meston."

In an incredibly short time we were mounted and ready to start. A horse had been procured for Seumas, who was no rider, and would have much preferred, in spite of his years, to make the return journey on foot; and David Webster, with much grumbling, had been seduced into the saddle by a lavish promise of reward.

"There is one thing that grieves me," said the Professor, sadly, as I took leave of him at the foot of the crag. "I had wished to have your weighty opinion of my ode, 'In Tregesimo die Januarii,' with which I have caused the parson to wind up his sermon for to-day. It would have been a great advantage to me to have your judgment. Stay, if you will lend me your ear for an instant I shall repeat it—'Tot scelerum fuit——" but here my horse bounded forward at a secret touch of the spur, and the Professor was left to recite his elegiacs to the gulls and curlews that were wheeling about high above the castle rock.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was dark as pitch, not a single star lit up the sky, and a high wind came whistling and howling up the Strath, moaning in the mouths of the glens, and rustling across the heather, as we stole, with all the caution of a band of cateran, along the road from Abergeldie to Balmoral. But we had no quarrel with the darkness, which was our best ally. The blacker the better for our purpose, and the wilder the night the fewer people were likely to be abroad. Cattenach bore a lanthorn shrouded under a corner of his plaid, which he sometimes cautiously flashed before him to make sure that we were on the right track. It was a night well adapted to cover our flight; but not being a Highlandman, I confess my anxiety as to

how we were ever to find our road through the mazy wildness of hills and moors that lay between us and the Mearns, where it behoved us to be before morning light, for there was no safety for us on the Mar side of the mountains.

Cattenach had met me in the hills as I crossed Mount Keen, and carried me off to a lonely shieling at the foot of Craiguise, well hidden by the long heather and shrubby stunted fir-trees; and while we lay there in concealment all day, until night should give us an opportunity of attempting our design, he told me all that had happened since my departure from Braemar. George of Coldrach had come back, and Balmoral himself was expected in a few days, his errand being to arrange some of Lord Mar's affairs, in the view, as Cattenach thought, of his lordship leaving the country when everything was over; and Coldrach had brought back word that the marriage must take place at once, before Balmoral's return to the camp. Such preparations as the hurry and the conditions of the times would admit

of were already on foot at the castle, and Bess, reduced to despair, had sought the aid of Cattenach, as had been arranged between us.

"It is this way, you see," said Cattenach, as we sat in the hut round a blazing fire of turf and heather-roots. "Balmoral is too deep in the mire to hope for mercy at the hands of King George's Government, even if he could bring himself to ask for it, and if he save his neck it will be the most that he can do; the lands will be sequestrated surely. But George of Coldrach is a young man, and this is the first time he has been out; and as he has not been very forward in the Sheriffmuir affair, he may be able to make his peace with the Government, and if he were married to Bess he may be allowed to keep Balmoral as well. The Government will find it difficult to drive things too hardly with us in this glen, and a newcomer stepping into the place of any of the old lairds would have but a short tack of it. And so, if Coldrach were to take the oaths, as Bess's husband there is good hopes that the Govern-

ment would let him a-be in Balmoral; and it is this that makes the laird and the lady so anxious to press on the bridal."

I said it grieved me to disturb so excellent a family arrangement; but not merely my own happiness was at stake. I could not bear that Mistress Farquharson should be forced into a match that she so much detested, and so there was nothing left for it but flight, and I asked Cattenach what arrangements he had made for guiding us through the hills.

"I shall go with you myself," said Cattenach, "for after this business I shall be well out of Braemar until the sough blow over. Not that I fear a Farquharson among them, but it would be foolish to fight against overpowering odds. So I'll e'en seek shelter in Dunottar for a season, until we see what comes of it all. There is a bonnie bay horse which George of Coldrach brought back with him, in the stable of Balmoral. He belonged to one of Whitham's dragoon officers, and I see not

why I should not take the loan of him to ride with you through the hills."

It was not a time to enter into an abstract discussion regarding the ethics of *meum* and *tuum*, and as Coldrach had come lightly by the horse, there was not much wrong in his losing him in a similar fashion. And so we rested in the shieling, laying our plans until the darkness fell, which, though the winter's day was short, I thought never would come, and refreshing ourselves with such rough hospitality as Cattenach was able to offer, consisting chiefly of venison collops and oatmeal bannocks, with plenty of native liquor. We had dismissed Seumas with an ample gratuity from me, which made the old man caper with joy in spite of his tiredness, and an assurance from Cattenach that if he dared to utter one word about our presence in the Strath, he would slit Seumas's tongue with his dirk. David Webster had been full of curiosity as to the object of our proceedings, and when he found his questions summarily

repelled, and himself sternly commanded to keep silent, he had showed signs of sulkiness and insubordination.

"Gin there is to be ony barns-breakin' among ye," grumbled David, "I'se be neither airt nor pairt intilt. I hae dune enough already to pit my neck in the mink, through gaein' oot wi' that fule maister o' mine, and I sall dae naething mair in manifest contempt o' the laws o' the kingdom made in the contrar. And sae I rede ye weel, tak' tent what ye dae."

"You see this pistol," said Cattenach, drawing a weapon from his belt and levelling the long barrel at David's head; "if you say one word more, or refuse to do a single thing that you are ordered, I shall blow your brains—if you have any—out on the instant, and that, too, without another word of warning, mark me. I would use no more ceremony with you sheriff's officer and messenger cattle than with a brock or a foumart."

David slunk back in abashed silence, and was ordered to saddle and lead out the three

horses. The one that Seumas had rode was intended for Bess, and Cattenach had promised to procure a side-saddle from the Balmoral stable. And so we felt our way along the road in the darkness, darker than ever under the gloomy skirts of Craig-na-ban, and passed the castle of Abergeldie, where one or two lights shone faintly from the narrow windows of the square tower. As we came in sight of the lights which showed where the castle of Balmoral lay, Cattenach halted.

"We must leave our horses here," he said; "we cannot venture to take them nearer. And you," he said to David, "for your life see that you stir not from this spot, and answer no questions whoever should speak to you."

"A'm thinkin' I haena muckle information tae gie tae onybody," grumbled David, "except it be that ye are after nae gweed. It wad be nae lee, in my opinion, to jalouse sae muckle as that."

A menacing gesture from Cattenach again reduced him to silence, and we walked as fast as

the darkness would allow us down the slope and across the level haugh in the middle of which stood the castle. Then, avoiding the houses of the cottars, we struck through the birches, and came round in view of that side of Balmoral which faced towards the Dee. My heart beat as I saw a light in Bess's window, the only light in that side of the castle.

"Keep back here, well back under the cover, until our signal is answered," whispered Cattenach, as from the verge of the birches he held his lanthorn aloft. I was breathless with agitation, and leaned against the trunk of a tree to support me, whilst I riveted my eyes upon the window of the room that contained my precious treasure. It was only an instant, though it seemed an hour, when the light disappeared from Bess's window. Cattenach again covered the lanthorn with his plaid, and again Bess's light reappeared. When the signal had been three times repeated, Cattenach hurriedly thrust the lanthorn into my hands.

"I must go now and try to get the horse,

I have promised Ian Bane, one of Coldrach's men, gold if he can help me to the horse." I thrust my purse into his hand. "You must stay here till she comes, and then make back as silently and as quickly as you may the way we came. I shall not be long behind you, unless I fall in with Coldrach. If I am not with you in a quarter of an hour, make for the hills with all speed. Your servant will be able to guide you through the passes when daylight comes. But do not lose your only chance waiting for me. If I fall, Coldrach will scour every corrie betwixt this and Glen Tannar until he overtakes you."

He disappeared in the darkness, and I stood with a beating heart, my eyes fixed on Bess's window, from which the light again shone forth. I saw her shadow in the room, and I could see that she came to the window and looked out to the night. Surely she must be looking for me. I could contain myself no longer, and crept softly up to an angle in the wall, close to the little door through which I

expected her to come out. As I waited there, every minute seemed long as an age, every sound a note of discovery. With strained eyes and ears I stood there in the thick darkness, for an eternity as it seemed, ready to spring forward on the sound of the slightest movement. At last the door was very softly opened, and a dusky figure stepped cautiously out. Without waiting to make certain, I sprang forward and clasped her to my breast. "Bess!" was all I could say in a choking whisper, and a stifled sob was the only reply. But that was not the place nor was it the time for love rhapsodies, and half leading, half dragging her with me, I led her through the birches to the road. We were more than a furlong from the castle before we ventured to exchange a word.

"Bess, my darling, my own brave love," I said, stooping to kiss her, "you have acted rightly, nobly. You shall never regret this sacrifice for me. My life henceforth is yours, to do with what you will."

"Oh, I do not know," she sobbed; "I do not know what I am doing. I believe I am mad. What will my father say? What will people think of me?"

"Your father will forgive and bless you in time, Bess. You cannot be wrong to follow the leadings of your heart. You are safe with me. We shall be married to-morrow, as soon as we reach Dunottar, and then nothing but death shall ever part us again."

She leant on my shoulder, and seemed about to faint, when we were startled by a tramp in the darkness, and Cattenach came running breathlessly up, leading a horse by the bridle.

"Mount, Mistress Bess! mount for God's sake!" he exclaimed in a low tone. "I have brought away your saddle, so up with her, Mr Bardolph. I sore fear all will soon be discovered, for some one was approaching the castle, and hailed me just as I got out of the courtyard. So on to our horses with all speed."

I quickly lifted Bess into the saddle, and while Cattenach seized the bridle and set off at a run, I kept by her side to support her in case she should faint, as I greatly feared. A few minutes brought us panting and breathless up to the top of the brae, where David Webster had remained with the horses.

"What!" cried David, as he perceived Bess. "Mistress Farquharson! Waur and mair o't. Know ye not that this is hamesucken and reif, punishable with the loss and forfeiture of life, lands, and goods, by several laudable Acts o' the umquhill Scots Parliament, a' ratified and appruven? But I'se hae nae finger in the ploy; I caution ye that muckle."

He threw the bridles from him, and stood apart. Cattenach drew a pistol from his belt, cocked it, and clapped it to David's ear; but an idea struck him just as he was on the point of pulling the trigger, and he lowered the weapon. "No," he said, sternly, "we shall take your horse with us, and leave you to the Farquharsons. Before daylight comes

over Craig-na-ban you will be hanging from the highest tree about Balmoral, but not before they have first half-hacked you to pieces with their claymores."

"Na, na," cried David in terror, "that manna be. A man may jouk an' lat King George's laws gae ower his head; but there is nae escaping the Farquharsons on this side o' Glenmuick. They're mair deadly, I trow, than the haill Coort o' Justiciary, lords, advocates, deputes, macers, buits, thumbikins—yea, even the rack hersel'—a' pittin' thegither. I'm for wi' ye;" and in great trepidation he hastened to aid me in transferring Bess's saddle to the horse I had brought for her from Dunottar.

"Ride now, ride on the spur," said Cattenach, jumping into the saddle. "Remember there is no safety until we have put the hills between us and Strath Dee;" and leading the way, he dashed on in front, we others following as closely as we could, while I led Bess's horse by a rein.

Never shall I forget that long dark eventful ride. Past Abergeldie, the white walls of which were grey and ghostly in the darkness; round Craiguise, where the road was blacker and more uncertain, and the rough road made us slacken speed somewhat. We heard the waters of the Girnock splash beneath our horses' hoofs rather than saw them. We rode up the shoulder of the hill on which the Knock Castle stands at a hand-gallop, and were presently plunging down into the still deeper gloom of Glenmuick. As we forded the Muick, we paused in mid-stream to let our horses drink—and Cattenach, who had turned his horse's head, and was bending low down in the saddle with his hand at his ear, suddenly cried in a loud whisper, "There is some one behind us. We are followed. To the hill! To the hill!" and snatching Bess's rein out of my hand, he dashed up the opposite bank.

It was a steep rugged road, now with stretches of hard loose stone, now with patches

of soft boggy peat, which delayed us even more; and our horses snorted and panted as we urged them up the ascent with incessant whipping and spurring. The road seemed to wind round the shoulder of a dark hill, and before us, to judge by the increasing gloom, was a yet higher ridge to be surmounted; but even to our eyes, all used as they now were to the darkness, all was black and indistinct. As we paused on the top of a spur of the hill, with, as well as we could make out, a stretch of moorland before us, Cattenach, who had been frequently falling to the rear and listening intently for sounds of pursuit, cried out, "I hear them. There are several horsemen, for I can make out the clatter of the hoofs and the ringing of the bridles of perhaps half a dozen. On again. If we can put the Polach Moss between us and them, we shall do yet. The sound travels far up-hill, and in the dark too, for they cannot be much above Braichlie yet. On again, for our lives!"

Again we set forward, our toiling horses

wading painfully through the long dry heather, which reduced us to almost a walking pace. We had left the track, but before us we could make out a low gap in the ridge that faced us, towards which Cattenach was evidently directing our course. Then came a rugged climb up the side of the hill, our horses panting and stumbling at every other step as we mercilessly urged them on. And then I began to understand where we were. We were coming to the Polach Moss, through which I had passed the previous morning with Cattenach's guidance. But how to cross it in such darkness, with bogs that would swallow up horse and man, black peat-banks up which no horse could ever be urged, and water-courses through the peaty soil, over which no horse could leap without inextricably embedding himself in the soft peat soil of the opposite bank.

At last we reached the summit, and halted to take breath, and listen and look around us. The wind was blowing about us in such strong

fierce gusts that we could barely keep our horses steady. Before us was the black stretch of the Polach Moss, behind us the dark hill-side, up which we could have no doubt that our pursuers were pressing after us; for we could hear the tramp of their horses and the clatter of steel whenever the wind happened to lull for an instant.

"We are trapped, Cattenach," I said, sorrowfully. "We shall never pick our way across the moss in this darkness. We must stand and fight them."

Cattenach muttered an oath, and threw himself from his horse. A big piece of rock stuck out from the summit of the ridge, and by a great exertion of his strength he wrested it from its bed and set it rolling down-hill. We could hear the dull thuds as it trundled down the steep declivity, now making the fire flash as it struck another rock or crashed through a cairn of stones, leaping over hollows in the hill, and clearing heights with one bound. And as we listened we heard

a warning cry rise up from the darkness far beneath us, the reports of several pistols, and then another shout, and the onward tramp of horses again. The pursuit had been resumed, and we had gained nothing by the ruse.

All at once Cattenach, who had been standing irresolutely, looking now gloomily across the dark tract of moss, now angrily down the hill, up which the noise of our pursuers could be heard more and more distinctly, and tightening his plaid and slackening his sword in its sheath, started and uttered an exclamation.

"I was a fool not to have thought of it sooner!" he cried. "I shall light our way across the Polach at any rate, and perhaps make it warm work for them to follow. I shall give George of Coldrach hell before his time."

With a pistol in one hand and his powder-horn in the other, he ran swiftly along the top of the ridge, and was speedily lost in the gloom. We waited in breathless anxiety, not

knowing what his intentions were, listening the while to the tramp of horse below, which was now drawing so near that we could hear the voices of our pursuers.

Away beyond us, in the teeth of the wind, we saw a faint flash, that gradually flickered up into a flame, and in another instant broke out into a bright blaze. We then had light enough to see Cattenach running along the ridge, stooping every now and then and setting fire to handfuls of dry fog and grass, mixed with gunpowder from his horn. He had fired the heather! But quicker far than Cattenach could spread the flames, the wind caught up the blaze, and shot a line of fire with the rapidity of lightning along the crest of the hill, while its gusty eddies spread the conflagration in all directions. The long heather and grass and moss, dried by the wind, kindled like match-tinder. Cattenach came running towards us like a madman, waving a bundle of burning heather above his head, which he every now and then stooped

down to apply in some fresh place to spread the fire.

No one who had not seen the sight could have believed how soon the whole hillside was in a mass of flame. The wind, blowing straight downward, drove before it a long line of fire, broadening with every whirl and eddy of the blast, while clouds of dark smoke rose up, to be tossed about tumultuously under the vault of heaven, which was already reflecting in dark-red flushes the conflagration below. The heat of a furnace came up from beneath, red-hot stones cracked and exploded like the rattle of musketry, and the whizzing and crackling of the heather as the fire leaped on, darting here and there to feed upon some fresh patch, filled the scene with an overpowering noise. Deer and hares and vermin of all kinds came rushing half-singed up the hill, often, in their consternation, passing quite close to where we were standing with our horses, and rushing on to cool their burns in the damp recesses of the Polach Moss. The spectacle

was so singular and wonderful that I almost forgot for the moment the emergency and danger of our affairs.

"To horse, to horse!" cried Cattenach, as he came running up and leapt into the saddle; "we must cross the moss while we have still light, for the fire is going down-hill, and all will soon be dark here again. I trow, Mistress Bess," he added, with a laugh, "I hae gi'en ye a bridal bonfire. But see, Mr Bardolph, look down there below you. I thought these chiels would have some trouble in standing the stour."

And as I leaned forward and peered across the tide of flame, still rolling swiftly downwards, there under a dense cloud of smoke were some half-dozen horsemen wildly galloping hither and thither, seeking for a safe place to break through the fire, but always borne backward by the choking heat and blinding smoke. I saw and heard one man madly spur his horse into the midst of the flames with a wild yell; but the animal reared and

backed, and finally threw his rider and dashed off down the hill, while the man quickly picked himself up and rushed back outside the line of fire.

"That was George of Coldrach," said Cattenach, with a chuckle; "and if he is not roasted, he is well singed at any rate. I doubt if he will ride the Polach to-night, at least on that horse; but there are five still left, and if they get through the fire, they will be hard upon our heels. So forward, Mr Bardolph, and I'll take Mistress Bess's rein."

With the light from the hill and the reflection of the sky above us we could pick our way through the moss as clearly as by daylight, although it would have been a formidable and dangerous undertaking in the darkness. Our horses had been breathed, and their feet cooled in the soft peaty road, and soon we were clear of the treacherous bog, and riding rapidly up through the short heather that clothed the hill between us and Glen Tannar. Cattenach had indeed provided

us with a beacon which was to light our way through the darksome hills, the worst part of our ride; for though we could no longer see the flames, which were now raging deep down in Glenmuick, yet from the luminous appearance of the sky and the shifting expanses of dark-red light above us, we could judge that the fire was still furiously spreading. Mount Keen, with rounded shoulders and upright crest, was clearly revealed to us, and even its deep corrie showed the darkness of its recesses in the reflection. The gleam spread from the dark mass of Lochnagar on the one hand, where it played on the snow on the ridges of the mountain, to Morven and Culbleen on the other, and the surface of Loch Kinnord mirrored back the dusky red hue of the heavens.

"We have beaten them," said Cattenach, with a laugh, as we descended the Glen of Corrie Vruach, and were crossing the head of Glen Tannar; "but it will be safer not to slacken spur until we get across Mount Keen

and begin to come down into the low country. More than George of Coldrach will have cause to remember this moonlight flitting of yours, Mistress Bess; and if Mar were likely to come back to the country, I would get little thanks for this night's work. But I reckon his Grace is not likely to trouble Braemar again, any more than myself, for some time to come."

"And what will become of you, Cattenach?" asked Bess, sympathetically, her interest aroused by the sacrifices the man was making for us, which she understood far better than I could do. It was almost the first time she had spoken since we left Balmoral. "You will not be able to go back to Braemar," and here she sighed and again showed signs of tears; "and I am the cause of all this trouble."

"Don't disturb yourself about me, Mistress Bess," said Cattenach, cheerily; "Braemar has been growing too hot for me for many a day past. I have only made the pot boil over. I shall fall back upon my place of Bellastraid in

Cromar, which indeed I should have looked better after than I have done, only that I liked better following the deer than following the plough, and was always hanging about my shielings in the Ballochbuie when I might have been better employed elsewhere."

"But Coldrach—my father—will be sure to put you to feud," said Bess, "if they learn that you have aided my flight."

"Troth, then, but I'll just bide it," said the undaunted Highlandman. "I never lowered point to a Farquharson yet, much as I have lived in Braemar. And there are men on the skirts of Morven and the howes of Cromar who would be sorry to see me placed in jeopardy at the hands of unfriends. So never fash your thumb about me, Mistress Bess: I shall do well enough, ye need not fear; and unless I am sore mistaken, there is a changed world coming for us all in these parts."

Bess only answered with a sigh, and we toiled on in silence up the shoulder of Mount Keen. The ascent was steep and rough, and

it took us all our time to keep our horses from stumbling on the rough track. As we reached the summit the ghost of a decaying moon greeted us as it rose wan and watery-looking over the Howe of the Mearns. Before we began to descend, we paused to look back upon the road we had traversed. There was no sound to break the silence behind us; nothing to make us think that our pursuers had been able to follow us. Only away in the distance over Glenmuick the red glare in the sky bore testimony to the fact that the hill was still burning, although, as Cattenach pointed out, the narrowing space reflected in the air showed that the fire was now reaching the bottom of the valley, where the wind was quieter, and the flames would spread with less rapidity. But the fire was still spreading up and down the glen, and before we began to descend the southern slope of Mount Keen, by the steep bridle-path called the "Ladder," we saw a band of fire shoot rapidly up the hill above

Aucholzie, reddening the sky around with a brighter flush.

Bess looked behind her with tearful sighs. "I shall never see Braemar again nor the sweet run of the Dee. Oh! be good to me," she whispered, with a sob, "for I have no one now in the wide world to care for me but you."

"Trust me, Bess, darling—trust me till death," I replied in a low voice; "and do not weep because you have made me happy. We shall return again to Braemar in better times, and all will be forgiven, and your father and mother will welcome and cherish you as much as though you had been married from their house and with their full consent;" but Bess could only sob under cover of her plaid.

It was in the hours of morning when we got out of Glen Mark, and the morning star was high in the heavens above us as we urged our tired horses along the frosty roads. Cattenach, who seemed to know every path in the Mearns, took us across country by the most

direct ways to Dunottar, avoiding at the same time the highroads, where there would be any chance of our attracting observation. We halted at a little village just as the grey morning dawn was breaking in the sky, and rousing the people of a small wayside inn, managed to obtain some refreshment for ourselves and to bait our horses. The good woman of the inn was full of solicitude and curiosity about Bess; but the ready-witted Cattenach's assurance that the lady's father was in King James's camp at Perth was a quite sufficient explanation of our night journey, while it also served to procure us the best accommodation and attention that the little hostelry could furnish. I managed to persuade Bess to lie down and rest for a little, while I sought Cattenach, who was drinking *aqua vitæ* with the host in the kitchen of the inn, to talk over the adventures we had passed through. Now that I had time, I thanked him warmly for all that he had done for me and Bess, assured him that I should feel a weight of

gratitude to him as long as I lived, and with some diffidence spoke of a reward. But at the first suggestion of money Cattenach drew himself haughtily up. He had done no more, he said, than any Highland gentleman ought to do for his friend, and he was proud to be of any service to me and to Mistress Bess, and I would not wish to put any affront upon him.

"And maybe I was serving my own turn as well as yours, Mr Bardolph," he said, with a laugh. "There has been bad blood between me and George of Coldrach this many a day, and I'm not sorry to have helped to put the glaiks upon him. And as for Mistress Bess, she is a brave lass, and, by my soul! Mr Bardolph, if you had not been first, I should have carried her off myself, though I doubt much if she would have been so willing to take the road. Here's her health anyhow. And if ye think that you're in my debt, why, you can clear all scores by allowing me the honour of being your best-man, for I suppose it is a hasty bridal that is to be the upshot of all this."

I assured him that my purpose was to get married as soon as we reached Dunottar, and as I wrung him warmly by the hand, I pledged him my word that none but him should be my groomsman, to whom Bess and myself both stood so much indebted.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached Dunottar, and the sun was low upon the western hills. I had ridden by Bess from the time that we had left the inn, and Cattenach had respected our privacy and had kept well in front, whistling merrily to himself the most of the way. I did my best to cheer up Bess's spirits, assuring her of the security and happiness that awaited us, and told her that there was a clergyman living with our friend Meston who would make us one in holy matrimony that very night. And I succeeded so far that she began to look brighter, and to speak with more confidence and courage; only when the thought came back to her of her parents and her home, her face fell and her eyes

filled with tears. And when, from a turn in the road, I showed her the dark-green expanse of sea, with the black keep and towers of Dunottar frowning over the waters, her nerves fairly forsook her, and she reeled in the saddle, and would have fainted had I not been quick to support her with my arm. She was at the threshold of a new life, and it was not much wonder though she gave way as she drew nigh to it, considering the fears and anxieties which she had gone through during the eventful night among the mountains.

We trotted briskly up the ascent to the castle gateway, when Cattenach, who was leading, suddenly reined in his horse with an exclamation and an oath. The cause of his perturbation was soon patent. Under the archway, evidently on the look-out for our approach, stood Governor Meston—and the laird of Balmoral. I sprang from my horse in time to receive Bess, who dropped into my arms in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

For some minutes all was confusion, and whatever wrath was in Balmoral's mind found no outlet, as he bent in silent anxiety over the lifeless form of his daughter, who lay in my arms with her head on my shoulder and her pale face turned up towards the sky, while I strove to restore her to consciousness.

"Take her in," said the laird at last, in a hoarse voice; "are there no women in the castle to help to bring her round? Here, some of you men, carry her inside," he cried, addressing a few loiterers of the garrison who had been attracted to the gate by the unusual scene.

But I would allow no one to lay a hand upon Bess except myself, and with the assistance of

Cattenach, who had meanwhile been tightening his belt and freeing his sword-arm from the encumbrance of his plaid, we bore her tenderly through the courtyard towards the hall entrance, preceded by Meston calling out loudly for brandy and women. At last a decent-looking matron, the wife of the Earl Marischal's master-gunner, hurriedly made her appearance, and Bess was laid upon a bed and restoratives administered.

"You must be cautious," said the Professor to me in a whisper. "I have done my part in bringing Balmoral round to take a sensible view of the business, and a rough struggle I had. When I first hinted what was coming, he would neither hold nor bind, but called for his horse to cut you off in the hills. He'd have not only spitted ye like a paitrick, but, like a second Virginius, would have dirked his ain dochter as weel. It took a chappin o' brandy and M'Gill's godly counsel to bring him round to a calmer frame, and to see that he would harm his own name and fame by making a bad

scandal a worse one. So see that ye be judicious and bear his reproaches with patience, for you must admit that you have done the family some scaith. But it is the old story, *improbe amor quid non mortalia pectora cogis?*"

At this moment Bess opened her eyes. "My father!" she cried, with a frightened look round the room; and then, as her gaze fell upon me, "Do not leave me, do not forsake me to his anger," and she held out her hands and clasped mine convulsively in her grasp.

"Have no fears, my bonnie woman," said Meston, paternally stroking her hair. "All will come right in a jiffy. The deil's never so black as he is painted, and Balmoral, though proud and kittle in the temper like all his kin, is no' without a father's feelings, and I'se take charge that Mr Bardolph and he peaceably make up matters. And hear me! Rest and recover yourself as soon as you may, for there is a Mess John below ready and waiting to make ane oot o' the twain o' ye. I would ye

had had a better coupling than a Jack Presbyter can give ye; but that loon o' a curate took to his heels this morning when he heard that King James's troops were disbanding, and the Hanoverians taking the north road. But since so it is that he has become the Church invisible, we maun e'en trust worthy Mr M'Gill to tie the knot; and, by my soul! if he make a slip-band he shall have a tight enough noose to himself, though it be the last act of my jurisdiction as governor of Dunottar. And so, Mistress Bess, rest and compose yourself, while Mr Bardolph has his crack with Balmoral, for there is little doubt your presence will be required belive."

So saying, Meston dragged me away with him, leaving Bess to the care of her female attendant.

"For God's sake and for the lass's sake speak him fair," said Meston hurriedly to me. "The laird's a placable man when the first burst of passion is o'er, and it will be your own fault if you do not 'gree quietly over this

matter. And listen! John Nepper and the Nicholas are lying waiting for ye in the bay of Stonehive, and he'll no' wait an hour longer than the midnight tide. So we must be expeditious."

We found Balmoral striding up and down the hall with great steps, and his mind evidently in a turmoil of anger, annoyance, and irresolution.

"And so, sir," he exclaimed, as he paused abruptly in his walk opposite to me, and fixed his eyes on my face with a deep frown, "this is the return you make me for my hospitality! We gave you the best that my poor house could afford, we sheltered and nursed you when at death's door, and as soon as you are well you repay me by stealing away my only child, my one ewe-lamb," added he, with a sorrowful groan.

"Come now, Balmoral," interposed Meston, taking the laird by the arm, "you promised me that this matter was to be made up. It behoves ye to play the part of Micio rather

than of Demea—although I don't suppose he ever heard of either," he muttered. "But ye know young folk will be young folk; young shoulders will not bear old heads, and a lad and a lass are just like flax and fire, and only Hymen himsel' can put oot the lowe. So ye'll just shake hands like kindly kinsfolk that is to be, and we'll drink to your alliance, and Mistress Bess's happy espousals. Ho there! Dauvit Wobster, bring ben the brandy-bottle."

I seized the opportunity to make a hurried and apologetic explanation. I had loved Bess, I assured the laird, from the time I had met her in London, and my sojourn at Balmoral had made me certain that my love was returned. They were all against me, all endeavouring to force her into a marriage with George of Coldrach—("Who has been writing to Argyll to get a peace all to himself, like Dicæopolis in the play—ay, and Balmoral to boot," interjected Meston with a look at the laird, who groaned and swore)—Bess had made up her mind firmly that she would never

marry Coldrach—that she would wed no one but me. What wonder, then, though she yielded to my persuasions, to my force almost, and came away with me, to escape a marriage that she could not bear to think of! And finally, I entreated the laird to hold all blameless in the matter except myself. I alone was the guilty person, and I stood there willing to make all the amends and explanations in my power.

"That villain Cattenach!" burst forth the laird. "You would never have got out of Braemar but for his assistance. I'll have vengeance on him at all events."

"E'en as you like, Balmoral," coolly replied the Highlandman, who was leaning on his sword in the window of the hall, an interested spectator of what was going on. "It's no' the first time that I have been at feud with the Farquharsons, and never doffed bonnet to the best of them. So try yourself, and let the thickest skin hold the longest out."

Balmoral clapped his hand on the basket-

hilt of his sword, but Meston and myself threw ourselves between them.

"Come, come," said the Professor, "we shall have no brawling here. When ye get home ye can have the braid hillside to fight it out upon all to yourselves. And mind ye, Balmoral, this is not a time for the dispersed and scattered remnant of King James's folk—*oves sine pastore* are they now truly—to be bickering and banes-breakin' among themselves; for the day is at hand, yea, is already come, when ae puir body will be glad to get a bit of bread and a sup of drink and a night's shelter from another, while the redcoats are rummaging the country for them all the time."

"True, indeed," said the laird with a sigh, "and that is the best that we can look forward to. But I looked for better things than this, Cattenach, for the auld kindnesses between us. I took your part with Lord Mar and against my own kin many a time and oft."

"If all your debts are as well paid as mine, Balmoral, you will be a rich man for all that

has come and gone. I have got a kindly and gallant gentleman as a gudeman for your dochter, who will keep her bien and warm while we are cauld enough in our hiding-holes on the muirs or in the corries, as seems most likely to befall us. An honest lad, too, that will stand by kin and friend; and who will say as much for the traitor Coldrach?"

Balmoral turned away without a word. "I shall go and see Bess," he said, abruptly; "no, stay where you are, Mr Bardolph. I can be trusted to speak to my own child, my only one, whom I am so soon to lose;" and with bent head and hands clasped behind his back, Balmoral repaired to his daughter's room.

The events of that afternoon and evening come back to me like a confused dream, which I vainly seek to disentangle and set down in their natural order. Memories I have of Meston, in a great state of excitement, bustling about, and, with much Latin and not a few English oaths, expediting preparations in the castle chapel for our marriage; of the Rev.

Mr M'Gill, whose rosy face was heightened to a crimson flush, poking sly jokes at his jailer, and lamenting, with sarcastic humility, his inadequacy to do justice to a ceremony which he was much afraid his poor Presbyterian ordination would not make as valid as could be desired; of a tender reconciliation between Balmoral and his daughter, and ample forgiveness extended to both; of a noisy supper, at which Meston engrossed the whole of the speech-making, discoursing mostly in the Latin tongue, and bursting into a flood of tears when he drank the health of his most sacred Majesty King James, now upon the high seas. And then the figure of Skipper John Nepper appeared upon the scene, like the man who drew aside Priam's curtains at midnight, to tell us that it was time to break up the revel, and that the Nicholas waited for us on the tide. Then one more round in bumpers to the health of Mr Bardolph and his bonnie bride; and we were descending to the shore amid a blaze of torchlight, which lit up the

black rocks and the gloomy overhanging walls of the castle, and threw a lurid light on the water's edge. Bess clung to her father's arm, who led her sorrowfully down to the boat that rocked alongside of the rough stone pier, and sobbed and cried that she could not and would not leave him. But the laird lifted her tenderly into the boat and seated her in the stern, where she sat sobbing, with her head muffled up in her plaid.

Balmoral wrung my hand. "I have given you all that was left to me," he said, "for lands and name and fame are all gone with King James. You are carrying her away to a strange land, and among an unknown people. May God so requite you, Mr Bardolph, as you use my bairn!"

"Amen!" said I, solemnly, and hastened to take leave of the others—for an unseasonable quarrel had already sprung up between Meston and M'Gill. The divine, whom the excitement, added to his potations, had rendered more flustered than ever I had seen him before,

had proposed to offer up a valedictory prayer —a proposal which the Professor negatived as Whiggish and Puritanical, ordering the castle trumpeter to play "Gude nicht and joy be wi' ye a'" instead. With difficulty I interposed in the contention, and drew Meston away.

"*Vale ut dignus es!*" cried the kindly soul, throwing his arms around me, and kissing me on both cheeks. "I never thought to be so sorry to part with an Englishman. My best wishes and prayers—when I say any—shall always be for the prosperity of you and Mistress Bess; and I shall never forget the happy time, the *geniales dies*, that for a season made us fellow-sojourners, *sodiales*, together."

"And you, Professor," I said, "I am afraid that your fortunes are in an unprosperous condition. Will you not come with us to England, where you are unknown to the Government, and where your attainments would secure you protection, and meet with a fitting reception?"

"Truly," said Meston, "I may not dis-

semble that I am in woful plight. But why should I make moan? My king has lost his crown, my noble patron his title and estates, and what are my humble misfortunes compared to those of so many of my betters? To be sure I sacrifice my chair in the Marischal College, and with it my daily bread; my bishoprick is removed from me and given to another—some vile Whig, dootless, deil sain him! To-morrow morning I shall lock this ancient castle and give the keys to the keeping of the deep; no red-coated soldiers of King George shall receive them out of my hands. And as for myself, I must just take to the hills, as better men have done before, and keep well out of the way of the law. *Custodi me a laqueo quem statuerunt mihi.*"

"And me, Professor," whined David Webster, "what is to become o' me? I'll never be sacrist o' Marischal College noo."

"Peace, sir, and be thankful that your neck is no' worth spending a tenpenny tow upon," said his master, sternly pushing him

aside, while I thrust some gold into David's open palm.

"You'll go with me, Professor," said Cattenach; "we are all in the same strait. You may lie on your back in the sun on the braes of Morven and rhyme to your heart's content, and deil a redcoat dare steer ye."

Here Captain Nepper impatiently interrupted us with, "Gin ye want to be overhauled by the Canterbury frigate, Mr Bardolph, there's no particular chase; but gin no', it is time you and me tae were on the south side o' the Bell Rock," and seizing me by the arm, he forcibly led me on board.

In the glare of the torches I saw Balmoral raise his eyes to heaven as he lifted his hat, doubtless in a silent prayer for his daughter. The sound of the trumpet, mixed with a cheer, came over the water; and, last greeting of all, came the voice of the Professor, not, I fear, without a hiccup, as he rolled out the mouth-filling line, "*Et longum, formose, vale, vale, inquit, Iola.*"

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE.

I HAVE told you the one romance of my life, the stormy prelude to many happy and uneventful years. It comes so often to my mind, and memory dwells so much upon its incidents, that it seems to me a lifetime by itself, though only the experiences of a few months. When Bess and I have little else to talk about, we go over and over again my adventures in Braemar: the night we lost ourselves on Lochnagar, and our fiery passage of the Polach; and again the brown mountains and rugged craigs of the Highland hills come back to us, and we again hear the pleasant murmur of the Dee. But tears mingle with these reminiscences, for our happiness and prosperity in England are

dashed by the sad tidings which every now and then reach us of those we have known and loved in the far north.

Balmoral was outlawed and his estates sequestrated, though his wife's separate estate of Auchlossan was allowed her by the Government. The laird had to keep out of the way for many years, and though he could sometimes venture to take up his abode at Auchlossan, his time was more frequently spent among bothies in the hills or in the houses of his old tenants in the glens of Braemar. Yet his loyal spirit is still unbroken, and his dreams are ever of taking the field again in the old cause and with a Stuart prince to lead him; and though he might have accommodated himself with the Government over and over again if he would consent to take the oaths, he hath ever scornfully refused allegiance to any save the prince whom he considers to be his just and lawful king.

Of Meston, too, we have continued to hear. Evil fortune hath been permitted to pursue

the Professor with unremitting tread. He and Cattenach managed to evade the authorities until the Act of Indemnity was passed, when he endeavoured to make a living by keeping an academy for the sons of the Jacobite and Nonjuring gentry, and was much esteemed among the adherents of the Stuart cause. I was able to be of use to him when I got my own publisher to venture on bringing forth his 'Knight of the Kirk; or, The Ecclesiastical Adventures of Sir John Presbyter,' in the year Twenty-three, about the time of Atterbury's exile. But whether it was the fact that we do not understand or care for the religious differences of the Scots, or that money was scarce owing to the recent ruin wrought by the South Sea Bubble, this is certain, that the book did not bring my friend the recompense which its merits deserved. He hath also sent me the other publications of his elegant Latin Poems and of his ingenious 'Mother Grim's Tales,' a work which, with its broad humour and biting wit, brings the Professor visibly

back before me. He too, like Balmoral, will not accept the present state of things, and lives on delusive reports of the intervention of the Regent and of an invasion of Britain in behalf of the house of Stuart.

We arrived at Culmford just as my poor little cousin had yielded up his feeble spark of life, and removed the only barrier that stood between me and fortune. Recent experiences had deepened, and, I hope, improved my feelings, and I was of some use in consoling my uncle for his bitter disappointment. Coming as we did at the time of the child's death, it served to make my marriage a secondary topic of interest, and to save Bess some coolness of reception which her nationality would have procured for her. My good mother took little pains to conceal her disappointment that I had thrown myself away upon a Scotswoman, and one too who, like all the rest of her countrywomen, had not a penny-piece to her name; and this, perhaps, was so far well, for Sir Robert, remembering the op-

position the Rectory had made to his own marriage, at once enlisted himself as Bess's devoted knight and champion, vowing with many oaths that the daughter of a gentleman who had fought for the king was a fitting match for the best man in the country. But it was not long before Bess's sweetness and good sense captivated the hearts of all her new relatives, and the Rectory found that I had indeed brought a daughter to the house.

Sir Robert and my father too both rest in the old vault in Prior's Grange churchyard, and for the last ten years I have reigned as squire at the Manor House. I have taken no part in politics, and, if I were put to it on oath, I do not know whether I should call myself Whig or Tory. Some of my neighbours speak of me as a Jacobite behind my back, but they do me too much honour. Though I would gladly tender my allegiance to King James if I saw him seated peaceably on the throne of his ancestors, I would never lift my little finger against our present monarch. I have come to

see that the prosperity of the country is bound up in the Georges as well as the maintenance of our religious freedom, and I have lost faith in any attempt to shake the present dynasty in the affections of the great majority of the English people. So I have kept clear of party, though I have not scrupled to oppose the oppressive measures of Sir Robert Walpole at our county and borough elections. With the Jacobites I have had little intercourse, having had to complain of unhandsome treatment at their hands. Because I was prevented from taking the field in Lord Mar's expedition, and as my name was left out in the proscription lists, they would have it, forsooth, that I was in the secret service of the Government. And it is only quite recently that I learned by what chance I had escaped the vengeance which overtook so many of Mar's associates. Chancing to meet Lord Orford after his fall one day, on one of my rare visits to London, and having always had a talking intimacy with

him since the days when we were young men in the Queen's last Parliament, the idea all at once occurred to me to ask how it was that I had got off scot-free after the affair of the 'Fifteen.

Walpole laughed. "Why, Sir Edward, bad as you believe us to be, we were not altogether without gratitude. Your letters to your uncle, Mr Thirlwall, contained the most valuable information the Government received about Mar's doings; and indeed we shaped measures in Scotland a good deal by your statements. You were a most useful ally to us in the enemies' camp."

"But tell me how, in heaven's name!—by what means you got hold of my correspondence, which I know never reached its destination?"

"Nay, my dear Sir Edward, 'tis a Cabinet secret. Be content that it stood you in good stead, and do not again tempt fortune. I fear there is trouble brewing again in the

North; but do not trust too much to your luck a second time."

And he went on his way, leaving me on the pavement musing in amazement at the revelation he had made to me.

Walpole is right. There is trouble brewing again in the North, and I pray Heaven the storm-cloud may pass over without working such ruin and havoc as I have once already witnessed. There is a stir in the glens and restlessness among the clans which bodes no good for the peace of the land. Emissaries from the Continent are coming and going. They come to me as an old adherent of the cause; but though I cannot refuse them hospitality, and certainly would not betray them, I will have none of their secrets. But from what I accidentally hear, there seems to be little doubt that a few months hence Braemar will again be stirred by the gathering piobrach, and its glens give up their brave inhabitants at the rallying-cry of the house of Stuart.

The thought brings back rousing memories of past days to me, but brings with it also the saddening and sickening thought that the tragic drama begun under the shadow of Lochnagar will have Tower Hill and Tyburn for the scene of its last act.

THE END.

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